

Statutory Notice

Publication Date: 10 January 2024



Gunnersbury Catholic School

Statutory Proposal: Prescribed Alteration To A School

The proposer

On Tuesday 19th December 2023 the Governing Body of Gunnersbury Catholic School reached the decision to publish a Statutory Notice on the proposal to make a prescribed alteration to the school's admissions process. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster has provided its in-principle support to the proposed change.

Name, address and contact details of the proposer

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School Local Authority

London Borough of Hounslow
Hounslow House
7 Bath Road
Hounslow, TW3 3EB

Description of prescribed alteration

The Governing Body of Gunnersbury Catholic School seeks to change the school's pupil admissions gender criteria from *boys only* to *coeducational* (mixed gender). It is sought for the first coeducational cohort to be our Year 7 intake of September 2025. Over subsequent years, Gunnersbury would become progressively gender-mixed i.e. as the initial Year 7 moves into Year 8 and so forth.

Gunnersbury Catholic School's establishment of this proposal and the associated measures have been produced with regard to the Department for Education's statutory guidance 2023 on making significant changes to maintained schools (**Appendix 1**).

Objectives of prescribed alteration

The prescribed alteration to our admissions would provide an appropriate and necessary response in addressing the overwhelming local parental/guardian demand for Catholic coeducational secondary provision.

Within Gunnersbury Catholic School's local vicinity (namely the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Ealing) there is considerable unmet demand for Catholic coeducational secondary school places. 'First-choice' preference applications for the local Catholic coeducational secondary schools extensively exceed the Year 7 admission capacity (Pupil Admission Numbers - PANs) of these schools. In contrast, 'first-choice' preferences for our single-sex Catholic educational provision have declined to levels considerably below PAN. Through transitioning to coeducation, Gunnersbury would be responding to the overwhelming demands of local families for a mixed Catholic secondary education for their children i.e. should Gunnersbury become a mixed school we can assist in meeting the significant deficit of mixed Catholic secondary school places locally.

Hounslow Secondary Schools	PAN (Yr 7 Intake)	Total Applications: 2023-24
Bolder Academy	180	647
Brentford School for Girls	120	399
Chiswick School	240	743
Cranford Community College	210	706
Gumley House School FCJ	180	573
Gunnersbury Catholic School	184	574
Heston Community School	205	693
Isleworth & Syon School for Boys	180	422
Kingsley Academy	180	485
Lampton School	240	1270
Nishkam School West London	108	442
Rivers Academy West London	210	411
Springwest Academy	180	382
St Mark's Catholic School	186	1150
The Green School for Boys	150	426
The Green School for Girls	155	598
The Heathland School	270	1400

Ealing Secondary Schools	PAN (Yr 7 Intake)	Total Applications 2023-24
Ada LoveLace CE High School	200	1116
Alec Reed Academy	180	239
Ark Acton Academy	180	201
Ark Soane Academy	180	423
Brentside High School	288	810
Dormers Wells High School	240	659
Drayton Manor High School	240	1013
Ealing Fields High School	150	1239
Elthorne Park High School	240	988
Featherstone High School	280	717
Greenford High School	300	1230
Northolt High School	180	221
The Cardinal Wiseman Catholic School	310	1025
The Ellen Wilkinson School For Girls	216	539
Twyford Church Of England High School	190	1296
Villiers High School	240	604
William Perkin CE High School	200	1139

At Gunnersbury Catholic School we provide for our students a caring, inclusive, Catholic education – one that enables superb outcomes, on all levels, for these young people. Gunnersbury’s Ofsted inspection of January 2023 deemed that Gunnersbury continues to be an *Outstanding* school in every aspect of our provision. Academically, Gunnersbury students consistently achieve to a level that is amongst the very best in the country. Our 2023 Progress 8 score of +1.11 places the progress of Gunnersbury’s GCSE students within the top 2% of all schools nationally. Additionally, the examination outcomes of our Sixth Form (which is already coeducational) are excellent.

The staff of Gunnersbury Catholic School are skilled educators, trained to teach all genders. The school outcomes reflect their expertise as educators; furthermore the success of our boys and girls in the Sixth Form, reflect Gunnersbury Catholic School’s capability to secure the very best achievement within a mixed setting. Gunnersbury Catholic School’s individualised approach to guiding students, applied to a fully mixed setting, would enable successful learning strategies to be implemented based on the needs of each specific student - regardless of gender. Adjusting Gunnersbury’s admissions policy to coeducational entry will enable both girls and boys to experience and benefit from Gunnersbury’s outstanding education from Year 7 all the way through to Year 13.

Gunnersbury Catholic School considers that adjusting our admissions to coeducational would:

- Appropriately respond to the overwhelming and extensively unmet local parental/guardian demand for Catholic secondary mixed-gender schooling
- Further our rich diversity – a foundation of our Catholic values
- Create a school setting that further reflects the composition and desired dynamics of modern society, thereby most effectively affording pupils with experiences and learning that best prepares them to positively contribute to our world now and in the future
- Build upon our legacy of educational excellence with the future provision of high-quality Catholic education for both girls and boys of the local community

Considered effect of the proposal on other educational institutions

No doubt in part due to Gunnersbury Catholic School’s location which directly abuts the boundary of Ealing local authority; only 39% of our pupils reside in our home borough of Hounslow. In fact Gunnersbury Catholic School’s intake is drawn from 15 different Local Authorities and over 170 primary schools. As such the governing body considers that any redistribution of student applications, were there a change to coeducation at Gunnersbury Catholic School, will likely be spread across a number of boroughs; minimally influencing the pupil applications at any one particular school.

Financial implications of the proposal

The proposal does not involve alteration of the Pupil Admission Number (PAN) at Gunnersbury Catholic School i.e. it is proposed to remain at 184. Transitioning to become a coeducational school would therefore not alter the current financial arrangements for Gunnersbury Catholic School over the long term. The current educational provision at Gunnersbury reflects excellent value for money. Were Gunnersbury to become a mixed gender school, there would be initial ‘one-time’ costs associated with the provision of further girls’ bathrooms. It is estimated that the bathrooms will cost circa £38K – this would be met through the capital funding at Gunnersbury.

Implementation considerations for the proposal

The Governors of Gunnersbury Catholic School undertook a comprehensive pre-statutory consultation on the proposal to transition to become a coeducational school. The pre-statutory consultation sought to: widely communicate the proposal; enable stakeholder comment and dialogue on the matter with the school (**Appendix 2 – Prestatutory Consultation Report**). The overwhelming majority of responses received through the pre-statutory consultation were in favour of Gunnersbury Catholic School becoming coeducational. Nevertheless, the governing body recognised that a minority of stakeholders were not in favour of the proposal. A set of frequently asked questions/themes with answers was produced to address apprehensions that stakeholders have shared (**Appendix 3 – Frequently Asked Questions/Themes**). All stakeholders' responses were considered by the governing body before they reached their decision to progress to the Statutory Notice.

Were approval granted for transition to coeducational status, it is planned for the first mixed Year 7 intake to join Gunnersbury Catholic School in September 2025. In advance of this date, alterations to the bathroom facilities would be made to enable sufficient capacity for girls. To minimise any impact on current students, the change to admitting both girls and boys would be progressive. In September 2025 the change to mixed education would begin with Year 7– the transition to a mixed school would then take place year by year whereby the initial Year 7s move into Year 8 and so forth. As a result, any students who had joined Gunnersbury prior to September 2025 would still be taught in single-sex subject and tutor groups until they joined the Sixth Form.

Statutory Notice Date

The publication date for this notice is 10 January 2024.

Procedure for individuals and organisations to respond to the proposal

Within four weeks (representation period) from the date of publication of this statutory notice, any person or organisation may submit an objection to and/or comment on the proposal. All objections and comments will be taken into account by the decision maker, London Borough of Hounslow, in their process to reach a decision on the proposal.

Such responses—in objection, of support, or otherwise – to the proposal should be emailed to Hounslow Local Authority using the address: childrens.ppu@hounslow.gov.uk

Alternatively responses can be posted to:

School Organisation Officer
School Organisation and Access to Education
Lifelong Learning, Skills and Employment
London Borough of Hounslow
Hounslow House
7 Bath Road
Hounslow, TW3 3EB

Closing date for responses is 12pm on Wednesday 7 February 2024.

Responses received after this representation period cannot be considered.

Obtaining paper copies of the Statutory Notice

A copy of the complete proposal can also be obtained by:

writing to Gunnersbury Catholic School
The Ride
Brentford
Middlesex, TW8 9LB

emailing consultation@gunnersbury.hounslow.sch.uk;

telephoning 02082325003.

Appendices

Appendix 1 [Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Appendix 2 Prestatutory Consultation Report

Pre-statutory Consultation Report

This report summarises the elements of the pre-statutory consultation and the responses received through each in relation to the proposal:

The Governing Body of Gunnersbury Catholic School, after due consideration of the options for future admissions to the school, seeks to change our pupil admissions gender criteria from *boys only* to *coeducational* (mixed gender). It is sought for the first coeducational cohort to be our Year 7 intake of September 2025; subject to formal approval from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster, Hounslow Local Authority and the Schools' Adjudicator. Over subsequent years, Gunnersbury will become progressively gender mixed i.e. as the initial Year 7 moves into Year 8 and so forth. Our Sixth Form is already long established as a coeducational setting.

Background

Within Gunnersbury Catholic School's local vicinity (namely the London Boroughs of Hounslow and Ealing) there is extensive unmet demand for Catholic coeducational secondary school places. First-choice preference applications for the local Catholic coeducational secondary schools far exceed the Pupil Admission Numbers (PANs) of these schools. In contrast, first-choice preferences for our single-sex Catholic educational provision have declined to levels considerably below PAN. In transitioning to become a coeducational school, Gunnersbury Catholic School can help to address the educational requirements of those pupils whose families have unsuccessfully sought for a place within a mixed Catholic school.

The change to admitting both girls and boys would be progressive. In September 2025 the change to mixed education would begin with Year 7. Following this the transition to a mixed school would then take place year by year, whereby the initial Year 7s move into Year 8 and so forth. As a result, any students who had joined Gunnersbury prior to September 2025 would still be taught in single-sex subject classes and tutor groups until they joined the Sixth Form.

At Gunnersbury Catholic School we provide for our students a caring, inclusive, Catholic education – one that enables superb outcomes, on all levels, for these young people. Our Ofsted inspection of January 2023 deemed that Gunnersbury continues to be an *Outstanding* school in every aspect of our provision. Academically, Gunnersbury students consistently achieve to a level that is amongst the very best in the country. Our 2023 Progress 8 score of +1.11 places the progress of Gunnersbury's GCSE students within the top 2% of all schools nationally. Sixth Form outcomes (A-Levels and BTECs) are similarly strong. Adjusting Gunnersbury's admissions policy to coeducational entry would enable both girls and boys to experience Gunnersbury's outstanding education from

Year 7 upwards. Foremost, this change in admissions will provide an appropriate and necessary response in addressing the overwhelming local parental/guardian demand for Catholic coeducational secondary provision. Furthermore, governors consider that admitting girls will offer additional opportunities and shared experiences to ensure that girls and boys are best supported to become part of, and effectively contribute to, a society that we seek to be more equitable and fair – not least in matters of gender.

Adjusting Gunnersbury Catholic School's admissions to coeducational would:

- Appropriately respond to the local overwhelming demand for Catholic secondary mixed-gender schooling
- Further our rich diversity – a foundation of our Catholic values
- Create a school setting that further reflects the composition and desired dynamics of modern society, thereby most effectively affording pupils with experiences and learning that best prepares them to positively contribute to our world now and in the future
- Build upon our legacy of educational excellence with the future provision of high-quality Catholic education for girls and boys of the local community

Governors Consultation Process

Timeline of prestatutory consultation

The prestatutory consultation took place from Monday 20 November 2023 – Monday 18 December 2023.

Distribution of prestatutory consultation document

- The prestatutory consultation document was published on the school website on Monday 20 November 2023
- The consultation document, accompanied by a letter from the Headteacher and Chair of Governors were sent to parents on the first day of consultation
- The prestatutory consultation document was sent to the local authorities of Hounslow and Ealing, who subsequently distributed the document to the governing bodies and schools of the local area
- All staff were emailed the consultation document, along with details of how to share their views
- All pupils were emailed the consultation document in addition to a letter from the Headteacher and Chair of Governors encouraging for pupils to share their views on the proposal via the online response form
- A 'pop-up' directed all school website visitors to the prestatutory consultation page where the prestatutory consultation document was to be found (along with links for stakeholders to share their views)

The consultation document explained how stakeholders could share their views on the proposal, namely:

through completing the online response form

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd948TkggJHlz8KsCypVdesc6Xmhqh1453LAofLpXJ1S25d8g/viewform?usp=sf_link

or

by emailing their views to the email address consultation@gunnersbury.hounslow.sch.uk

Consultation meetings

To share detail and encourage dialogue on the proposal, 'in-person' consultation meetings were arranged for: staff (27 November 2023); parents and other stakeholders (4 December 2023); pupils (one year group at a time throughout the consultation period with additional meetings to convey the proposal to and receive feedback from SEND students).

In addition to the 'in-person' meeting an online (Zoom) meeting was arranged for parents and other stakeholders on 6 December 2023.

Consultation Responses

Staff Consultation Meeting – 27 November 2023

The meeting was led by the Headteacher (Kevin Burke) and Chair of Governors (Andrew Flatt)

40 Staff attended the meeting

The Headteacher and Chair of Governors shared the proposal with staff and then opened up for questions from colleagues

Staff questions:

Staff 1 Will we keep the 'Catholic' in 'Gunnersbury Catholic School'

KB- Yes the only change would be on the admissions policy

Staff 1 Would the priest reference return?

KB The Certificate of Catholic Practice has been removed on advice from the Diocese. If we were over-subscribed then it might return

Staff 2 Will other schools be affected by the proposal?

KB Over the last 3 years over half of our pupils have not come from Hounslow so any one school should not be disproportionately influenced were we to become co-ed

No objections to the proposal were shared by staff

In-person Parent/Stakeholders Meeting – 4 December 2023

The meeting was arranged to be led by the Chair of Governors (AF) and Headteacher (KB)

1 Stakeholder attended the meeting

Main themes discussed with abridged Gunnersbury responses

Stakeholder How many girls did we think we'd recruit?

AF We really couldn't estimate and that there was no model for us to refer to. I thought

	it would be evolution, and it would be incremental
Stakeholder	Was this part of an expansion by Gunnersbury?
AF	No, we are not seeking to expand.
Stakeholder	There would need to be some changes at Gunnersbury as a consequence of the move
AF	Yes, we recognise this and there would be appropriate training delivered to all staff. Many of whom have experience of teaching in a co-ed environment. Gunnersbury is about us getting the very best out of every student, boy or girl, and delivering our superb outcomes to a more diverse group of Catholic students
Stakeholder	Where was the origin of the data that we based our proposal on?
KB	The data has been provided through Hounslow LA.

On-line Parent/Stakeholders Meeting – 6 December 2023

Presented by:

Ms Linda Pope -vice chair of governors; Mr Kevin Burke – Headteacher

Attended by:

7 Stakeholders

The Zoom meeting began with a presentation on the proposal. Following the presentation Kevin Burke (KB) responded to the questions that were submitted prior to and during the session.

Stakeholder Questions with abridged Gunnersbury responses

Questions submitted prior to the meeting

Stakeholder Question: I sent my sons to Gunnersbury school because it is a single sex school where the environment caters to achieving the best for boys. We were promised a school who understands boys and how to get the best out of them. I don't want this compromised by including girls. A catholic boys school in the area should be protected. The governors have mentioned potential teacher changes which could prove disruptive for existing pupils on top of a new school ethos. I believe this will have a detrimental impact on Gunnersbury school. If the school are not filling their quota, I suggest opening their catchment area or improved promotion and representation in the community and beyond.

KB: Any pupils currently at Gunnersbury will continue only to be taught with boys until the Sixth Form. We'll continue to know how boys learn whilst combining that with effectively providing for the learning of girls. Our outcomes reflect our expertise as teachers furthermore the success of both boys and girls in the sixth form reflects our capability to enable the very best achievement within a mixed setting. From time to time I work as an Ofsted inspector and the qualities that we have here at Gunnersbury are shared with other outstanding schools whether they are single-sex or mixed. Successful schools have a calm, ordered, respectful environment and I don't see the transition to co-ed affecting this.

There will be no planned change to our staff but in common with all schools we are facing great challenges in filling the places of staff who have left. Many potential staff wish to only work in a mixed environment. Greatest risk of disruption to the education at Gunnersbury is the shortage of teachers that exists in London and beyond. Our catchment area isn't contained – any pupil living anywhere can apply. Unfortunately we have far fewer prioritising a place at Gunnersbury than there are places to offer. We have extensively promoted our school to primary schools in the area, both

Catholic and non-Catholic, but the number of applicants reflect an overwhelming preference for mixed schooling.

Stakeholder Question: What extra measures will you be putting in place to ensure lack of disruption to the students starting Y11 in 2025?

KB: First and foremost we will be continuing to do all that we currently do with Year 11s including: an increased timetable with two extra lessons a week compared to the rest of the school; Saturday lessons; intervention/revision lessons during the half-term and Easter holidays; over the course of the year a series of mock examinations are sat by the pupils within the exam hall. Overlying this, the changes that we made to the school timetable following Covid added a further 4 lessons to the individual timetable of each pupil in every year group. Were Gunnersbury to become coeducational, students in Year 11 in 2025 wouldn't have girls joining them. Coeducation will begin in Year 7 and move upwards year-on-year. Whilst we will need to make some adaptations, our track record (not least our continued and further success following Covid) indicates that we are very capable of effectively responding to change and continuing to progress Gunnersbury as we do so.

Stakeholder Question: Has there been any communication, either by school or diocese, regarding the impact of the proposals on other local schools?

KB: Our proposal has been shared with all of the schools within the local area and the Local Authorities. This pre-statutory consultation is part of the process of sharing the proposal to all stakeholders. A myriad of factors affect the applications of pupils to schools including: the local population of school-age children; Ofsted ratings; examination results; even the nature of school buildings. Although it is difficult to accurately predict in any year what will happen even to one's own school population we do not think that a change to coeducation will extensively or disproportionately influence the admissions of any individual local school. Not least as over the last three years over 50% of our intake has been from boroughs other than Hounslow. What we do know is that there are 100s of pupils who have been unable to achieve their first preference and be allocated a place at one of the local catholic coeducational schools. Conversely the number of pupils seeking a single-sex Catholic education at Gunnersbury has declined and first preferences are far below the number of places that we have available.

Following these answers, questions posed by the guests whilst on the Zoom meeting were addressed:

Stakeholder Question: What is the timeline?

KB Governors will consider the responses to the consultation at its close. They will then decide whether or not to move forward to a statutory consultation.

Stakeholder Question: How will the governors decide?

KB The governors, taking into account the thoughts and suggestions put forward through the consultation, will make a decision on whether to continue to the statutory phase with the proposal. They will seek to determine if the identified need for Catholic coed places is valid and if GCS should

seek to meet this parental need.

Stakeholder Question: What will happen if the proposal doesn't go ahead?

KB If we do not become a coed school we will carry on doing what we've always sought to do – enabling our pupils to have the best possible education

Stakeholder Question: Is it financial?

KB It is clear to us that there is an unmet need for Catholic coed places in West London and we wish be part of addressing the requirements of these families.

Stakeholder Question: How do staff feel about the proposal?

KB All staff who have so far expressed their thoughts on the proposed change have been very positive.

Stakeholder Question: How will we balance the numbers of girls and boys?

KB The number of boys and girls who potentially apply and receive a place isn't controlled – the admissions system doesn't differentiate between a girl and a boys application to a mixed school. Gaining a place at a mixed school is determined by factors within the admissions policy beyond gender e.g. distance.

Stakeholder Question: Considering the success that has been had teaching boys, how can we ensure that isn't affected by the addition of girls?

KB We'll continue to know how boys learn whilst combining that expertise with effectively providing for the learning of girls. Our outcomes reflect our expertise as educators, furthermore the success of our boys and girls in the Sixth Form reflect our capability to secure the very best achievement within a mixed setting. As I've observed as an Ofsted inspector: successful schools, whether single-sex or mixed, have a calm, respectful and ambitious environment: the admission of girls to Y7 will not alter this approach.

The meeting ended after all stakeholder questions had been responded respond to.

Meetings with students

Following the Headteacher's/Chair of Governor's sharing of the prestatutory proposal and their associated letter with pupils, pupils of every year group were addressed at their assemblies by the Deputy Headteacher (Mr Finnegan). Mr Finnegan explained the proposal to the students and encouraged for them to ask of him any questions on the matter. Furthermore, Mr Finnegan reminded students that, and should they wish, they could share their views on the proposal through the 'consultation response form' and/or by email to the consultation email address.

In their informal conversations with the Deputy Headteacher, students were mostly very positive about the changes. Those students who expressed concern to Mr Finnegan were mostly worried that the academic standards of the school would fall through the transition. Mr Finnegan assured these students that our current ethos and academic success would remain were Gunnersbury to become a mixed school. Furthermore, he reminded pupils that the classes for current pupils would remain single-sex until the Sixth Form.

Meeting with SEND Pupils

As part of the consultation process on Gunnersbury Catholic School becoming a mixed school the SENDCO engaged with a range of learners identified on the schools SEND register. All conversations were voluntary and were initiated by the SENDCO as he engaged individuals, or groups of students, in conversations. The SENDCO established that all of these pupils were willing for their views and comments to be included within the consultation.

The SENDCO found that the students were intrigued by the idea of Gunnersbury becoming a mixed school and that, at least in the context of chatting with a teacher, it had captured their imagination – they were eager to imagine how Gunnersbury would be different as a mixed school. Overwhelmingly the responses received were positive and reflective of the exciting potential that these young people believed Gunnersbury had in becoming a mixed school.

Comments shared with the SENDCO included:

‘This is the best school in the country, why shouldn’t girls be able to benefit from it’ (Year 8 SEN Support)

‘It will make high school just like primary school with girls and boys learning together’ (Year 11 EHCP student)

‘More chance to make friends’ (Year 7 EHCP student)

‘My sisters will be able to go to the same school as me – we will all go to Gunnersbury’ (Year 11 EHCP student)

‘This will make Gunnersbury ‘normal ‘with boys and girls being together’ (Year 9 SEN Support)

‘Good idea’ (Year 7 SEN Support)

‘Sixth form works really well with boys and girls learning together, why not lower down the school’ (Year 12 SEN Support)

‘Gunnersbury is a great, this will make it even better!’ (Year 10 SEN Support)

Pre-statutory Consultation Online Response Form Submissions and Emailed Responses

Online Response Form

A total of 147 stakeholders submitted their views on the proposal via the Online Response Form. 92 respondents approved of the proposal for coeducation, 47 respondents objected and 8 respondents neither approved nor objected to the proposal. On analysis, the majority (62.6%) of these respondents were in favour of Gunnersbury Catholic School transitioning to coeducation in September 2025.

Respondent	Approve	Object	Neither
Member of staff at Gunnersbury – prospective parent/guardian	2	0	0
Member of staff at Gunnersbury	14	0	0
Other	2	5	0
Current Parent/Guardian	49	28	3
Prospective Parent/Guardian	7	0	1
Student	18	14	4
Total	92	47	8
Percentage	62.6%	32.0%	5.4%

In addition to being able to indicate their response to the proposal – for/against/neither – stakeholders were enabled to submit their written views and thoughts on the matter. Every such response was considered by the governing body.

Email Responses

There were a total of 6 emailed responses. 2 responses were in favour of coeducation at Gunnersbury. 4 emailed responses objected – one of the 4 objecting emailers also submitted an objection via the Response Form – this stakeholder’s response is thereby included in the totals for both the online response form and the email responses.

Each emailed response was considered by the Governing Body.

Governing Body Meeting Considering Prestatutory Consultation Outcomes And Decision

At their extraordinary meeting on Tuesday 19 December 2023 governors met to consider the outcomes of the prestatutory consultation. All stakeholders’ responses were individually considered by the governing body. It was recognised that the majority of responses received through the prestatutory consultation were in favour of Gunnersbury Catholic School becoming coeducational. On considering all of the information and responses gathered through the prestatutory consultation, it was decided by the governors that transition to coeducation in September 2025 was the appropriate course of action for Gunnersbury Catholic School to seek. As such, the governing body took the decision to progress to submitting, in January 2024, a Statutory Proposal for Gunnersbury Catholic School to admit both girls and boys to Year 7 in September 2025.

To best address the apprehensions of stakeholders who were not in favour of the transition, governors determined for a set of Frequently Asked Questions/Themes with governing body answers to be created and shared alongside the Statutory Proposal.

Proposal For Gunnersbury Catholic School To Become Coeducational

Generalised Frequently Asked Questions/Themes

Why are you proposing to become coeducational?

The local coeducational Catholic schools are exceptionally oversubscribed with 'first choice' applicants. 100s of families are currently unable to gain their first choice of such education at these local schools. In contrast, first choice preferences for our single-sex Catholic educational provision have declined to levels considerably below our Pupil Admission Number. Through transitioning to coeducation, Gunnersbury would be responding to the overwhelming demands of local families for a mixed Catholic secondary education for their children i.e. should Gunnersbury become a mixed school we can assist in meeting the significant deficit of mixed Catholic secondary school places locally.

My son is currently at Gunnersbury, will he have girls joining his class if Gunnersbury becomes coeducational?

Were Gunnersbury Catholic School to transition to coeducation, all boys joining Year 7 – Year 11 before September 2025 would continue to be educated in classes only comprising boys (until sixth form).

Do students learn better in mixed or single-sex classrooms?

Studies such as those of the NFER (2002) and the Smithers Report (2017) detail that there is no clear evidence indicating that achievement is better in single-sex schools compared to coeducational environments or vice versa. Regardless of gender intake, key aspects of successful schools include: high expectations; clear pupil guidance; excellent teaching; quality pastoral support.

Some families seek a single-sex education for their children

We of course understand that some families wish for a single-sex education for their children. As such we are proposing to transition to coeducation year-on-year starting from Year 7 – thereby ensuring that the boys of those Gunnersbury families whom specifically sought a single-sex education will not be taught with girls (until the 6th Form). For those families seeking a 'Boys only' education from September 2025 onwards –irrespective of faith –were Gunnersbury to become coeducational there would be two remaining 'Boys schools' within the borough. Beyond Gunnersbury there are two other Boys Catholic schools in West London. As these Catholic schools have a 'lottery' admissions system applicants are not disadvantaged by virtue of their home location. Furthermore the future likelihood of an applicant gaining a place in any West London school (assuming schools' Pupil Admission Numbers remain the same) will increase as the pupil population in this area of London declines (LA/GLA forecasts).

What are the admission plans of other local schools?

Gunnersbury is unable to comment on the plans of governing bodies at other schools beyond acknowledging that each is responsible for determining admission arrangements that they consider most appropriate for their school and local community

Will behaviour and the ability for students to concentrate on their studies decline if Gunnersbury becomes coeducational?

Our high expectations, clear pupil guidance and quality pastoral support would continue were we to become coeducational. The introduction of girls should not equate to a drop in the standards of behaviour and/or application of students to their studies.

We feel that a single-sexed environment is best for pupils' personal development in their teenage years

Whilst we respect this viewpoint, we consider that there are benefits to pupils growing up attending a coeducational school. Mixed schools allow children of different genders to grow up and be educated together. A classroom reflecting society can – under the guidance of teachers – provide further opportunities for pupils to: learn and experience the value of other genders; understand the challenges faced by those of the opposite sex; develop a deeply embedded respect for those who are of another gender. At Gunnersbury, such learning would be founded upon our Catholic values.

Would Gunnersbury's success at educating boys be compromised by becoming mixed?

Our staff are skilled educators, trained to teach all genders: many have significant experience in teaching both boys and girls. Were we to become coeducational, we'll continue to enable boys to learn to the highest levels whilst combining that expertise with effectively enabling excellent learning by girls - as exhibited in successful coeducational schools. Our outcomes reflect our expertise as educators, furthermore the success of our boys and girls in the Sixth Form reflect our capability to secure the very best achievement within a mixed setting. Through our individualised approach to guiding our students, we would continue to be able to implement successful learning strategies based on the needs of each specific student - regardless of gender.

Were Gunnersbury to become coeducational, how will it be ensured that there is a smooth transition; including the effective preparation of those sitting public examinations in 2025?

By initiating the consulting of stakeholders in 2023, we have sought to ensure that there is appropriate time for change management processes to be put into place well in advance of possible changes in 2025. If a transition to coeducation were to be agreed, Gunnersbury Catholic School will continue to implement all that we're doing with Year 11 pupils including: an increased timetable with two extra lessons a week compared to the rest of the school; Saturday lessons; intervention/revision lessons during the half-term and Easter holidays; a comprehensive series of mock examinations undertaken by Y11 pupils over the course of the year. Overlying these provisions; the changes that we made to the school routines and timetable, following the Covid pandemic, added a further 4 lessons to the individual timetable of each pupil in every year group.

How would a change to coeducation at Gunnersbury impact the admissions at other local schools?

No doubt in part due to our location directly abutting the boundary of Ealing local authority; only 39% of our pupils reside in the borough of Hounslow. In fact our intake is drawn from 15 different Local Authorities and over 170 primary schools. As such; we consider that any redistribution of student applications, were there a change to coeducation at Gunnersbury, will likely be spread across a number of boroughs; minimally influencing the applications at any one particular school.

Would Gunnersbury be unique were it to transition from a single-sex school to become coeducational?

Over recent years four state secondary schools in the Diocese of Westminster have embarked on the transition from single-sex to coeducation. Such transitions have also taken place in a number of non-Catholic state schools in England. Furthermore the move to coeducation has also occurred within the independent sector with schools including; St Benedict's, Westminster School, Wellington College, Charterhouse School; all moving from single-sex provision to coeducation.

How have you communicated the proposal for coeducation to stakeholders?

As appropriate and necessary, Gunnersbury has observed the statutory guidance setting out the communication requirements associated with proposals to make a 'significant alteration' to a school. Following extensive dialogue with the Diocese of Westminster and their subsequent approval for Gunnersbury to seek to become coeducational, the governing body took the decision to initiate the pre-statutory consultation. This is the first element of the prescribed method by which such a proposal must be communicated and stakeholders' responses received; prior to making a formal decision to proceed further or otherwise. We value the opportunity afforded by the pre-statutory consultation to share our proposal with all stakeholders and to learn of their considerations. Through setting aside a full four weeks for the pre-statutory consultation, Gunnersbury has sought to ensure that sufficient time has been set aside to appropriately engage with our stakeholders. The proposal was communicated widely to best ensure all stakeholders were informed. In addition to the facilities established for stakeholders to share their responses with Gunnersbury, opportunities were enabled for stakeholders to engage in direct dialogue and communication with Gunnersbury leaders. Such opportunities included the 'on-line' consultation stakeholder meeting (6 December 2023) and the 'in-person' stakeholder consultation meeting (4 December 2023). The pre-statutory consultation is followed by a 4 week period of formal consultation (Representation) whereby Gunnersbury's Statutory Proposal/Notice on transitioning to coeducation is published and distributed. Interested parties have a further period of 4 weeks to share their considerations on the matter with the decision maker, the London Borough of Hounslow.

Will Gunnersbury's sporting provision need to change?

In recent years Gunnersbury has been seeking to add further options and opportunities to the sport and extra-curricular provision for our students e.g. the addition of dance to the PE lessons. Some boys and girls like the traditional sports such as rugby and football, whilst some do not. Ultimately it is important that we continue to work to establish a good mix of sports and physical activities which will provide enjoyment and opportunities for all students to fully engage in this key part of our curriculum.

Will further emotional support be required by a mixed student population?

We have always recognised that high quality emotional support and care for individuals' mental health are essential components of a quality education: undoubtedly these are elements critical to the wellbeing of both girls and boys. As such, over the last few years considerable work has taken place to raise the profile of these areas and to provide the necessary support at Gunnersbury – including the appropriate utilisation of external agencies. New initiatives include: the establishment of a mental health lead; training of mental health first aiders; commissioning of external mental health support such as CATE+. Furthermore, in the New Year all staff are being trained in a 'Trauma informed approach' to pastoral care. The boys in Years 7-11 along with the 6th Form boys and girls have utilised and benefitted from our efforts in this area. Regardless of a change to admissions, emotional support and mental wellbeing are aspects of our care that we are continually seeking to further.

What new facilities will be required within the school to enable girls to join?

Our new sports facilities, in common with such Department for Education builds, were constructed with changing areas and toilets for each gender. Similarly our Sixth Form faculty was built for occupation by both girls and boys. Further bathrooms for girls use will undoubtedly be needed - these would be installed in stages to reflect an increasing population of girls as the mixed years move up the school.

Would all lessons be taught together in a mixed format at a coeducational Gunnersbury?

Almost all subjects would be taught in a mixed capacity. However, PE (and possibly some elements of PSHE) would likely be taught as single-sex classes.

Would the gender balance of the school be 50:50 for boys and girls if Gunnersbury were to become coeducational?

This would solely depend on the nature of applications to Gunnersbury i.e. how many girls and boys apply; their preference that they apply to our school; how these students relate to the criteria within the admissions policy.

How will the proposal be shared with students and their views collected?

All students were provided with a copy of the Prestatutory Proposal. Accompanying the proposal, the students received a joint letter from the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher advising them of: the proposed plan; the importance of their views; how to share their views. Further to this each year group were met with by the Deputy Headteacher. The Deputy Headteacher explained the proposal, answered questions and encouraged pupils to share their views through the online response form. In addition to our whole-school communication to students, we sought to ensure that our SEND students were suitably informed of the proposal and their voices heard. To achieve this, at appropriate opportunities the SENDCO met with different SEND students to advise them of the proposal and to capture their views.