

STATES OF JERSEY



PROPOSED USE OF FORMER JERSEY GAS SITE: REQUEST FOR RECONSIDERATION (P.45/2025) – COMMENTS

**Presented to the States on 14th October 2025
by the Council of Ministers**

STATES GREFFE

COMMENTS

The Council of Ministers request States Members to reject this proposition for the reasons detailed in the comments below.

Introduction

In July 2021, P.43/2021 was adopted as amended by the Assembly. Part of the amended proposition supported by Connétable Crowcroft is copied below:

that no site in government ownership that is suitable for a modern standard primary school in St. Helier and St. Saviour should be allocated for another purpose until the strategic review of the education estate of St. Helier and St. Saviour is completed, and sites are allocated and approved for modern standard primary schools according to the educational needs of these Parishes.

The Town Primary School Review 2022 was commissioned to assess a new site for the construction of a new primary school(s) in St Helier. The report was published in October 2022 and after consideration of over 30 potential sites the outcome was to build a new 2-form entry school on the Gas Place site. Site selection was based on right size, right location (catchments, walking distances, outside play spaces, new housing developments) and meeting building standards (BB103+, local Standard).

The Bridging Island Plan (BIP) specifies the former Jersey Gas Place site is safeguarded for educational use. Any alternative development of this site will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated it is no longer required for educational purposes. The BIP also states that the redevelopment of States of Jersey or States-owned companies' land in local centres for the purposes of meeting education needs will be given the highest priority.

In July 2024 the Council of Ministers held a workshop to discuss options for the former Jersey Gas Site. This covered:

- The Case for Change for a new Town Primary School
- An assessment of site options
- A summary of demographic changes
- Consideration of other options to manage demographic changes

At the end of the workshop there was a broad consensus to continue with the well-established plans to build a new school on the former Jersey Gas site.

Demographic changes

A demographics planning exercise is conducted annually that considers the impact of birth rates and migration on pupil numbers to support pupil number forecasts. Over the last twelve months, there has been additional focus on this work, with a clear need to understand the impact of falling birth numbers and a shift in pupil migration trends. The details provided below confirm there is no need for further additional assessment of demographic changes. A new school on the former Jersey Gas site does not increase capacity, it creates a new modern efficient use of land to build a school and community hub that consolidates three existing provisions, (Springfield, St Luke's and La Passerelle) into one modern purpose-built facility.

Births have reduced considerably in recent years – from 1,020 in 2016 to 723 in 2024. In the last three years we have also seen more pupils leaving the island than arriving. The latest population projections from Statistics Jersey indicate that the number of under 16s on island will reduce under each of their migration scenarios and are unlikely to return to current levels in the next 20 years.

As a result, pupil forecasts for the next 15 years have been prepared that consider where pupils live, what type of school they are likely to attend and what we anticipate their needs will be. These are used to create a range of scenarios that refine the use of the school estate considering falling numbers and that meet the educational needs of all children and young people in the future.

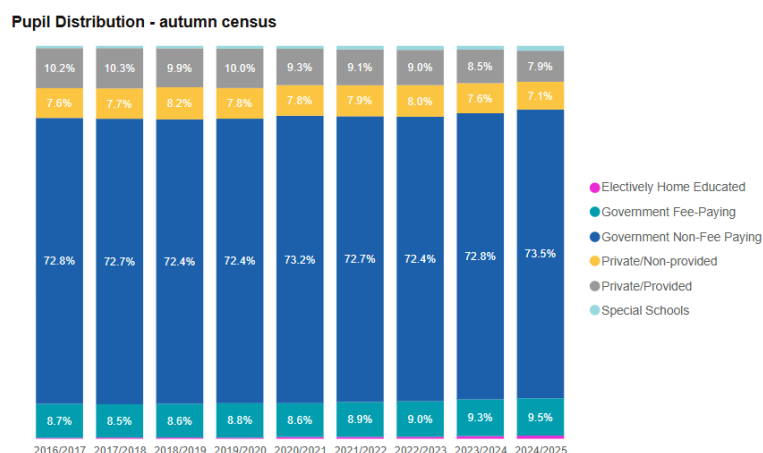
In the academic year 2024/25 pupil numbers from Nursery to Year 13, across all settings, are 14,762. In fifteen years' time this number is forecast to be 12,045 (18.5% reduction).

With an ambition for class sizes of 26 in town and 28 elsewhere, the current GoJ non-fee paying primary schools currently have capacity for 5,852 children and currently 85.7% of those spaces are filled. The town primary schools currently have capacity for 2,912 children and 83.2% are filled, capacity in the remaining schools is 2,940 and 88.2% are filled. In 15 years, it is anticipated that 72% of the total GoJ primary school places will be filled.

One change under consideration is a reduction in class sizes across all schools, to 25 per class, regardless of geographical location. This would give a total capacity in GoJ non-fee paying primary schools of 5,425, of which 92.5% spaces would be currently filled. The town primary schools would have capacity for 2,800 children with 86.5% currently filled, capacity in the remaining schools would be 2,625 with 98.8% currently filled. In 15 years, it is anticipated that 77.5% of GoJ primary school places will be filled.

A 5-10% buffer is intended to be retained on total school places to facilitate any changes in the system that allows us to adapt to future population changes.

Figure 1: The % of pupils attending Government of Jersey non-fee paying schools is stable at around 73.5% of pupils from Reception to Year 6. The pupil distribution informs part of the approach to forecasting.



It must be highlighted that we are also experiencing increasing levels of children with additional educational needs and have an urgent need to expand and improve our provisions for children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEN/D).

The number of children in Jersey with a Record of Need has increased from 2.5% of all primary children 5 years ago to 6.1% of primary children in 2024/25. Both specialist primary schools are at capacity.

The number of children attending La Passerelle Primary School has increased from 5 pupils, five years ago to 25 pupils in 2025.

Mont a l'Abbe primary school has increased from 56 five years ago to 67 in academic year 2024/25. There are Alternative Resource Provisions (ARPs) within six primary schools (previously only four) which are also at capacity. There is a lack of physical capacity in our current schools to build additional ARPs to meet the demand.

The plans for the site include much needed provision for specialist education which will support children whose needs we cannot currently meet within our current estate. The new site will have dedicated specialist provision attached to the mainstream school which none of our existing sites allow us to provide in one single location. We have at least 22 children in mainstream town schools who need a specialist provision that is not currently available. We anticipate that this level of need will continue to increase which is causing significant challenge for schools.

Figure 2: Pupils attending St Luke's and Springfield School have a higher % of children with SEN/D, Multilingual Learners and Jersey Premium. Schools with ARPs have a higher % of children with SEN/D. St Luke's and Springfield do not have ARPs.

	% Jersey Premium	% Multi Lingual Learners	% Special Educational Needs/Disabilities (inc Record of Need)*
St Luke's and Springfield	37.6%	43.9%	19.7%
All GoJ primary schools	26.9%	32.6%	18.5%

The reduction in pupil numbers represents an opportunity for our education system to reform and enable resources to be re-directed into key areas that require investment such as inclusion, teaching staff terms and conditions, curriculum and school improvement. We have a responsibility to invest in education to ensure that all children learn and play in a suitable environment and that those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive appropriate investment in provision that meets their needs. The new town primary school site is an integral part of a wider series of reform and changes for which proposals are currently in development.

Households data

The Council of Minister do not agree that it would be a good use of limited resources to commission data collection, collation and analysis of households living within 400 metres of the site. As described above, extensive demographic analysis has already been undertaken to assess and confirm the need for the school. The Millenium Town Park

will remain for enjoyment by all nearby residents and those who live further afield. The new school will also deliver improved and safer access to Millenium Park through to St Saviour's Road.

Analysis of health and other benefits

The Council of Minister do not agree that it would be a good use of limited resources to commission analysis of the health and other benefits of a larger Millenium Park compared to the current proposals to develop additional new parks in other locations.

It should be noted that a new park on the Springfield school site will be directly opposite a home for the elderly providing easier access for those residents to green space in town.

Traffic Impacts

Sustainable transport will be a feature of the planning application process and alongside the Safer Routes to School Initiative and active travel plans, any traffic impacts can be minimised. Previous surveys do confirm that the majority of pupils already walk to their town primary schools.

Updated financial projections

Until such time as final plans are agreed for the new school it is not possible to accurately define the exact build cost or the ongoing maintenance costs. Naturally one modern efficient building will cost less to maintain than two ageing buildings and some refurbished portacabins. The Council of Ministers do not support the proposer's suggestion that refurbishing Springfield, La Passerelle and St Luke's and "making do" is realistic. No amount of additional capital investment will deliver the outside space that is missing from these schools. It is acknowledged the new school will cost millions to build, the Council regard this a much needed investment in our education infrastructure and the families and children who live in the neighbourhood.

Issues with the current estate

There is an ongoing requirement to address the ageing town based primary schools. The current school estate has a number of problems, most notably at St Luke's, Springfield, La Passerelle and Rouge Bouillon Schools, and at Janvrin School in the near future. These older buildings are in poor condition, are expensive to maintain, lack sufficient outdoor play space, and do not support the delivery of a modern-day curriculum nor the provision of wider services to children and families. These challenges mean that these schools are both difficult and expensive to maintain. This problem is further exacerbated by the latest fire safety and broader health and safety regulations and requirements.

Both Springfield and St Luke's school are undersized (both internal and external areas) and do not meet the minimum school building size guidelines. Internal space at both schools is extremely limited and lack any breakout rooms or 'safe' learning space to specifically respond and de-escalate children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Both schools have been extended in previous years to accommodate a nursery class and there is no further space to extend. **The lack of space cannot be rectified through additional funding or development at these sites.**

The Gross Internal Area at Springfield School is 1,481m², compared to St Martin's School (a similar populated school) which has a Gross Internal Area of 1,755m². The school uses cupboards and tiny rooms with no windows as 'learning' space and for teachers to complete their planning, preparation and assessment (PPA).

St Luke's has similar challenges with extremely limited internal space. The staffroom is used as a learning space and there is no designated planning, preparation and assessment space for teachers. The classroom sizes are mostly all below the minimum recommended size (60m²) and the building design and classroom shapes cause further limitations.

Both schools have limited external outdoor play areas or a playing field. School building guidelines recommend a minimum total net site area of 1,800m² which includes soft informal and social space for a wider range of outdoor educational opportunities, hard outdoor PE space and hard informal social outdoor play space. St Luke's only has circa 682m² of external hard surface play area and Springfield has circa 1,382m² of external hard surface play area, and therefore both are significantly below the minimum recommended size. The children of these St Saviour and St Helier schools are disadvantaged compared to children attending rural schools and modern town schools who do have access to sufficient outdoor space with a range of hard and soft space. The Council of Ministers do not believe that this disadvantage can be resolved effectively and environmentally, by the daily transportation of children from St Helier and St Saviour to rural parish schools such as Trinity.

The newly built primary school includes a provision for specialist education. There is an urgent need to provide specialist education to meet the increasing levels of pupils with additional educational needs. The current specialist education provided at La Passerelle Primary School moved to temporary accommodation within a portacabin structure in 2023 because of intolerable fire safety risks being identified at its previous accommodation.

There is a compelling requirement for a fit-for-purpose provision for children with needs and a long-term solution to the current location in temporary portacabins must be found. The co-location of this provision will promote staff learning between the mainstream and specialist provision and facilitate the movement of pupils between schools to support transition.

There is a strong case for change for a new primary school to be built in St Helier and the newly built primary school will strengthen the delivery of effective, high quality and efficient education to children living in St Helier, regardless of their socio-economic background or barriers to learning. The construction of a new school will also future proof the delivery of education in St Helier.

It is recognised that schools need to be efficient to run and represent good value for money. The new school on the site expects to deliver running cost savings of approximately £427k per year achieved by reducing the estate.

New School

The former Gas Place site benefits from the existing Millennium Park forming an extension of the outdoor amenities. The external play spaces are a continuation of the linear design of Millennium Park to the west with significant green links and "Millennium Park Walk" through to St Saviour's Road. The location of the school in the

existing Millenium Park naturally encourages more children to access the existing facilities and addresses the inequity of these opportunities in rural schools.

A new catchment area will be created in central St Helier to encompass the newly built town school that is appropriate to the size. Analysis was undertaken to calculate walking distance to the new school to ensure the location of the school enables pupils to walk a reasonable distance and encourage more opportunity for physical activity. Primary school aged children living in St Helier will benefit from being able to walk to a school in the heart of the local community and increase opportunity for families to participate in their child's education.

Children living in the town area often have limited access to outdoor space at home. The design of the school being on multiple floors enables 5,000m² to be made available for outside play space. Innovative design utilising flat roof surfaces will enable play space to be made available to school children within the building itself and on multiple levels. It is also proposed that the community will be able to access the green spaces of the new school facility beyond the school day.

The school green spaces will therefore not only just benefit the children attending the school but also the whole St Helier community. In addition, the conversion of the current Springfield School site and Le Bas Centre to dedicated new parkland and community open spaces was agreed by an Amendment to the Government Plan 2023 - 2026 (P.97/2022), by the Council of Ministers. The Springfield site would provide an additional 5,400m² of open space in St Helier.

The plans for the new school also include a hub for community and other key family services to utilise, particularly benefiting families who might otherwise have limited access to these services. There are several benefits to families and the wider St Helier community to the co-location of services. Provision of services that support children in a single location reduces barriers to learning and creates a feeling of belonging.

Conclusion

The Council of Ministers agree that the importance of play for the young should always be a factor in decision making. Play happens outside of schools in leisure time and is also an important part of the 187 days per year when children are at school.

The children of St Helier and St Saviour and all other parishes deserve the opportunity to attend modern schools with up-to-date facilities and sufficient outside space to play and take part in sporting activities. The case has been proven over and over again that the facilities at La Passerelle, St Luke's and Springfield schools are totally inadequate and "make do" is not an option this Council supports. The children who attend these schools are disadvantaged by the lack of facilities and space inside and outside of their schools. A new school on the former Jersey Gas site will deliver a consolidation of three schools into one facility, creating a modern facility designed to serve the needs of these children for their statutory education, but also deliver facilities for community use and the release of other site(s) for additional green space.

The Council of Ministers recommend the States reject this proposition.