



Website/Social Media Statement

It is with great sadness and the deepest regret that the Court of Governors of the John Whitgift Foundation has announced its intention to close Old Palace of John Whitgift School in 2025, with some year groups (Pre-School, Reception, Years 7, 10, and 12) closing in August 2024.

We know how distressed everyone in our community will be by this news. Our staff, pupils and their families have together maintained this school's finely deserved reputation for excellence in girls' education – a reputation it has held for more than 130 years.

We ourselves are distraught that we have been forced to take this decision after all our attempts to secure the future of Old Palace have proved not to be viable.

The background is that the school has struggled financially for many years, and the Foundation has supported the school from its general reserves in the expectation that the financial situation would improve at some point.

However, in recent years compounding factors such as the cost-of-living crisis, increased costs, the growth in expense for necessary capital investment projects as well as anticipated demographic changes have made the sustainability of the school beyond the short term impossible. There is also the broader national context, with upheaval in the independent sector at the moment leading to a number of school closures as well as forced sales or defensive mergers.

After a great deal of consideration – including exploring options such as a potential relocation and investing in a whole new school – the very regrettable position is that the Court of the Foundation has been left with no alternative but to announce its intention to close the school in August 2025. All the analysis and evidence suggest that the school's finances will only deteriorate, making the sustainability of the school beyond the short term impossible.

However distressing this is for everyone involved, we believe it is the option which brings the most certainty and clarity to the situation, giving families up to two years' notice so they can make other plans in as considered a way as possible.

Our primary consideration is to ensure the impact on our students' education is minimal and we will remain in close touch with parents over the coming weeks and months in order to do everything we can to support all those who make up our community.

Existing close contact with other schools in the area means that a full and open discussion can be had with headteachers about availability of places at their schools. Meanwhile, we remain committed at Old Palace to providing a high-quality educational experience for our pupils until summer 2025.

While I am desperately sorry to be the bearer of this news, I would nonetheless like to thank staff and students for all their commitment, support and achievements for our school over the years.

We will regularly update our school community with any developments. If there are any questions in the meantime, please contact Catherine Shirley at:

enquiries@johnwhitgiftfoundation.org

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Houlding', with a small flourish at the end.

Christopher Houlding
Chair of the John Whitgift Foundation