

BRIGHTON AND HOVE CITY COUNCIL

Statutory Notice for school closure – St Peter’s Community Primary and Nursery School

In accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Brighton and Hove City Council proposes to close St Peter’s Community Primary and Nursery School with effect from 31 August 2024.

Contact details

The name and contact address of the local authority or governing body publishing the proposals:

Head of School Organisation
Brighton & Hove City Council
Hove Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove
BN3 3BG
schoolorganisation@brighton-hove.gov.uk

The name, address and category of the school it is proposed that should be discontinued:

St Peter’s Community Primary and Nursery School
St Peter’s Rd,
Portslade
BN41 1LS

Implementation

It is proposed that the school will be closed on 31 August 2024. It is not intended to implement this proposal in stages.

Reason for closure

The city is seeing a significant decline in the number of children seeking a school place.

School funding is primarily determined by the number of children on roll, and falling rolls equate to reduced funding to deliver education. While primary schools’ rolls are falling but the number of schools remains unchanged, there is effectively less financial resource across all schools. This is because many costs are driven by the number of classes in a school, whereas funding levels are driven by the number of pupils.

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are a sufficient number of school places for pupils and that places are planned effectively. The Council monitors surplus Reception places, a key measure of demand, and aims to maintain a 5-10% surplus across all city primary phase schools to allow for parental preference and for movers across or into the city.

Since 2017 the Council has been seeking to reduce the number of surplus places in its primary phase schools, through proposed reductions in published admissions numbers. Not all of these proposals have been able to be implemented, leaving the city with a significant

number of surplus places and, with the impact of parental preference, meaning some schools remain full and viable and others not.

In the Census 2021 it was revealed that Brighton & Hove’s population profile had fewer children & young people aged 0 to 19 (20.5%) compared to the Southeast (23.1%) and England (23.1%). There was a 22% drop in children aged 0-4 living in the city in the 2021 census compared to the 2011 census.

The Council’s own projection of pupil numbers starting Reception in the coming years forecasts that there will be 640 surplus places in 2025 and 657 surplus places in 2026. The earliest indication for 2027 suggests that number will rise to 824 unfilled places.

Therefore, with 2610 starting school places the city will have over 25% surplus capacity from September 2025.

| School Year | Pupil Forecast | Unfilled places | Surplus Capacity |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| September 2024 | 2132 | 478 | 18% |
| September 2025 | 1970 | 640 | 25% |
| September 2026 | 1953 | 657 | 25% |
| September 2027 | 1787 | 823 | 32% |

In the October 2023 census the school had recorded the following number of pupils on roll compared to October 2022. The school has the capacity to admit 210 pupils.

| Census Date | N2 | Year R | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 | Year 6 | Total |
|--------------|----|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|
| October 2023 | 21 | 12 | 13 | 10 | 12 | 17 | 9 | 18 | 112 |
| October 2022 | 16 | 18 | 13 | 16 | 17 | 13 | 17 | 19 | 129 |

This was the lowest total number of pupils of any of the city’s primary schools in October 2023. The only school with a lower pupil population was Hertford Infant School (80 pupils) but this school only has three age groups compared to 7 in a primary school.

St Peter’s Community Primary and Nursery School has also recorded a total of 21 children in its nursery provision in October 2023. Currently there are 27 children on roll at the nursery.

For the financial year 2023-24, the school has set a deficit budget. The Council can facilitate schools to set a deficit budget by using the surplus balances of other schools to offset this position. Should the amount of school deficits exceed the amount of surplus balances there will be a need for the Council to underwrite these deficits from its own General Fund.

In 2023/24 the total amount of school balances forecast is £4.5m and the total amount of school deficits forecast is £4.4m. However, based on previous trends, it is expected that the school balance figure will be adjusted upwards by the end of the financial year as schools have historically set cautious budget plans that have ended up being more positive at the end of the financial year, compared to what had been forecast.

The use of a license deficit permits schools to plan their budget to balance or move into surplus within a 3-5 year period. The current economic conditions faced by schools,

including the funding levels set by central government are making it more difficult for schools to maintain a positive budget position.

St Peter's Community Primary and Nursery School budget forecast for 2023/24 is a deficit of £203,000. Based on budget plans submitted in summer term 2023, the school is unable to forecast reaching a balanced budget position in the longer term.

During the consultation period the school submitted a high level budget plan intending to indicate an alternative option to closure however they were unable to demonstrate an ability to move out of a deficit budget position.

The revised proposals put forward by the school to assist them to remain open were about mitigating the low pupil numbers, through reducing the PAN and enhancing the nursery and SEN support made available. Proposals did not consider how the school would seek to improve levels of parental preference and fill to the school's capacity of 210 pupils. The Council's view is that a medium to long term strategy to maintain the school though a reduced number of pupils onsite is not a viable approach with pupil numbers still expected to fall in future years and parental preference being a mainstay of government policy.

The budget situation is further compounded by how the school will need to pay for a leased part of its premises. The lease runs until 2037 and has further rent reviews scheduled for 2027 and 2032. The current annual rent is circa £42,000. Without the support of the Schools Forum (which used to meet this cost but will not from the end of this academic year), the funding to meet the annual rent would have to be made by the school from its own funding or by the Council directly.

The school's current Ofsted grading is Requires Improvement. The school has a temporary leadership structure with an Executive Headteacher and Head of School. This is not a long-term leadership model with the governing body working outside of any formal collaborative structure such as a federation. The Council recognises the school have provided a revised plan that includes a substantive Headteacher however the Council does not feel the high-level proposal is viable and therefore does not merit further detailed proposals.

Pupil numbers and admissions

At 8 January 2024 the school had the number of pupils on roll detailed below.

| School | Yr R | Yr 1 | Yr 2 | Yr 3 | Yr 4 | Yr 5 | Yr 6 | Total |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| St Peter's Community Primary School | 13 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 12 | 3 | 16 | 69 |
| Numbers of surplus places | 17 | 21 | 23 | 21 | 18 | 27 | 14 | |
| Percentage of surplus places | 57% | 70% | 77% | 70% | 60% | 90% | 47% | |

The school is a co-educational school that admits girls and boys. In January 2024 the school had 26 boys and 43 girls on roll. It is a primary school with a nursery class with an age range of 3 to 11. Pupils in the nursery class are not of compulsory school age. Figures from the May 2023 school census show that there were 33 pupils on the nursery of which 10 were part time and 23 were full time. All pupils are day pupils. In January 2024 there are 27 children in the nursery.

Nursery roll since autumn 2020 is shown below

| School year | Autumn term | Spring term | Summer term |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| 2020/21 | 14 | 16 | 21 |
| 2021/22 | 22 | 20 | 30 |
| 2022/23 | 15 | 23 | 31 |
| 2023/24 | 21 | | |

Pupils are able to start school before they reach compulsory school age if their parents choose to send them to school at the start of the academic year rather than at the start of the term they would become 5.

The school is in the Portslade planning area. Nominally the postcode BN41 1 is assigned to the school and two others, but it is recognised that the school will admit pupils from outside that area including from West Sussex. The planning area is expected to have approximately 100 surplus places in 2025 and 2026 and over 110 in 2027. The school admits the lowest number of pupils of schools in the planning area.

In West Sussex County Council's [Planning School Places](#) document it states that in the Lancing planning area, the "current provision of places across the planning area is sufficient to meet the demand from those expected to apply for a place for starting school in the coming years". The planning area is operating at 89% occupancy and is considered full by WSCC when at 95%. In the Shoreham planning area it states, the "primary pupil numbers in the school planning area have seen a steady decline in recent years and whilst this does not reflect other areas of the county is based largely on changes to the demography in the area". It is operating at 90% capacity. The forecast primary pupil numbers in the Adur district shows a decline through to 2026-27.

As of 9 October 2023, there were 9 pupils (9%) with EHCP's at St Peter's. According to the October 2023 school census, there were 24 pupils (21%) recorded as being SEN Support.

In the January 2023 census, 24.4% of the school population had English as an additional language and 31.3% of pupils where the parent/carer/self-identified ethnic group is other than White British, Refused or Not Known.

Displaced pupils

It is expected that pupils in Year 6 will continue to attend the school until its proposed closure at the end of the academic year 2023-24.

| St Peter's current pupil numbers at 8/01/2024 | R | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 |
|---|----|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Pupils living in Brighton & Hove | 8 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 2 |
| Pupils Living in West Sussex | 5 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 9 | 1 |
| Total | 13 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 12 | 3 |

There are 4 schools within 1.0 mile of the school, and 10 schools within 2.0 miles of the school. Spaces in other schools at 8 January 2024 are shown in the table below.

| School (distance from St Peter's in metres) | Current Year group | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Year R | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 | Year 4 | Year 5 | Year 6 |
| St Peter's – Current pupil numbers | 13 | 9 | 7 | 9 | 12 | 3 | |
| St Mary's (545m) | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 0 | |
| Benfield (1246m) | 6 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 15 | 4 | |
| Brackenbury (1062m) | 1 | 0 | 5 | 13 | 7 | 2 | |
| St Nicolas (1109m) | 1 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 | |
| Peter Gladwin (1723m) | 0 | 1 | 6 | 3 | 2 | 3 | |
| West Hove Infants – Portland Rd (2357m) | 2 | 1 | 8 | 8 | 13 | 3 | |
| Hangleton (2799m) | 8 | 9 | 8 | 09 | 9 | 19 | |
| Mile Oak (2886m) | 3 | 17 | 4 | 15 | 7 | 20 | |
| Eastbrook (1931m) | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| The Glebe (3058m) | 8 | 16 | 22 | 13 | 0 | 0 | |
| Holmbush (3862m) | 4 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 0 | 17 | |
| St Peter's (Shoreham) (3862m) | 5 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 | |
| St Nicolas & St Mary's (4023m) | 0 | 13 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 0 | |
| Swiss Gardens (4667m) | 14 | 22 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|----|----|----|----|---|----|--|
| Shoreham Beach (5150m) | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 4 | |
| Buckingham Park (5472m) | 31 | 14 | 15 | 12 | 8 | 13 | |

Mapping of children by postcode demonstrates that they reside across a wide area within and outside of Brighton and Hove. This means that families are very likely to have several alternative schools within statutory walking distance of their homes (i.e. two miles for children under eight years of age, three miles for pupils aged 8–16).

The table above demonstrates there are sufficient vacant places at schools within a reasonable distance. This includes a recognition of sibling link connections plus younger children currently in the nursery.

It is known that some pupils live in West Sussex, and it is reasonable to assume that some of those pupils will seek places in schools outside of Brighton and Hove.

There are currently 21 children attending the nursery (autumn 2023). There is currently early years provision at 29 settings within a two mile walk of St Peter's, including private, voluntary and maintained providers, offering a range of full day, all year round, and sessional term time only provision. All these providers are on the Ofsted early years register, follow the Early Years Foundation Stage, including the learning and development and welfare requirements, and offer the early years free entitlements. Of these providers one is a nursery class at Goldstone Primary School offering equivalent provision to that at St Peter's.

The Council has begun discussion with other schools about the potential of opening up governing board led nursery provision to maintain a similar offer to that at St Peter's into the future.

Where possible we will place a child at the school preferred by the parents/carers and support will be provided to find and apply for new schools.

No interim arrangements are required for pupils.

Impact on the community

The Council does not underestimate the potential impact of this proposed change on the pupils at the school, whose circumstances may already make them vulnerable. We recognise the school serves some disadvantaged families and therefore professional support, from the support services such as the Inclusion Support Service, Schools Mental Health Service and Ethnic Minority Achievement Service, will be put in place to facilitate the movement of those students to local schools and minimise the impact of change upon them.

The Council recognises the value placed upon the historical importance of the long-established school in south Portslade, it having opened in 1906 and it being a community resource that includes intact air raid shelters from 1939. There is concern that this asset will be lost to the community. It is expected that the site will remain as it is now preserving the

school as a good quality example of an Edwardian state infant school with Arts and Crafts influences, in addition to the air raid shelters underneath.

The Council is hoping to retain the knowledge and experience of staff working at St Peter's Community Primary and Nursery school, should the school close, for the benefit of the education community in the city.

It has been recognised that the school's community stretches beyond the area the school sits within and consideration has been made to how pupils and families can be supported in that transition so that the sense of community can be given the chance to be maintained. It is expected that this will happen through the scheduling of opportunities for pupils and families to come together through and beyond the transition phase with the support of the Council's Schools Mental Health Service.

The closure of St Peter's Community Primary and Nursery School would reduce the number of surplus primary school places in the city.

The Council considers that allowing surplus places to remain at current through inaction would directly and negatively impact the financial viability of many local schools, which in turn will have an impact on the quality and breadth of the education offered at those schools.

Maintained nursery schools

Not applicable.

St Peter's Primary School is not a maintained nursery school. Nursery provision currently exists at the school and parents /carers who access this provision will be able to access alternative provision locally. Information and advice for parents can be found at: www.familyinfobrighton.org.uk

During the initial public consultation significant levels of concern were raised about the potential loss of the schools' nursery class that is teacher led, is considered to be affordable, meets the needs of working parents and is highly regarded. The Council recognises that whilst there is sufficiency of nursery provision in the area, not all of those factors are provided for all.

Special Educational Needs provision

At St Peter's School no specialist places are specifically reserved for pupils with special educational needs.

The numbers of children with EHCPs and on SEN Support are provided above.

The Council understands that a change of setting for pupils with SEN can often be challenging and require additional support to ensure a successful transition. Officers from the Council are making arrangements for all children including those with EHCPs and on SEN support, to ensure that they are appropriately placed. If the decision is taken to proceed as proposed, parents will be supported in the Spring term to help them understand their options and find out their preferences for alternative schools for their children. Families with children who have an EHCP impacted by this proposal will be directly supported by the SEN team to explain the process of how their children will transfer to other schools.

The Council has secured one-off additional funding to support children and families in their transition to new schools. This process will be overseen by the Assistant Director for Education and Skills and oversight and scrutiny will be provided by the co-chairs of Children, Families & Schools Committee.

The Council acknowledges the support provided by the school to children with a range and intersectionality of additional needs and vulnerabilities. Unfortunately, the high level of support currently provided has become increasingly difficult to sustain for schools like St Peter's which have falling rolls. The financial impact of low pupil numbers is cumulative and therefore this support cannot continue to be provided and will lead to increased school deficits.

As a result of these proposals, outcomes for pupils with SEND may improve as they would move to a more financially viable and therefore long-term sustainable school. This means that the new school would be able to provide the additional necessary support and resources required to support children with EHCPs and those on the SEN register.

Travel

Information is provided above to demonstrate that alternative school places can be provided within a reasonable distance. It is known that some pupils live in West Sussex and it is reasonable to assume that some of those pupils will seek places in schools outside of Brighton and Hove.

It is recognised that longer journeys to school may occur for some families if they take a place at a school further from their home address.

Assessment for home to school transport assistance needs to consider if the child is eligible under distance or the above SEN criteria including, are the child's learning difficulties or disabilities such that it could not be reasonably expected that the child could walk to school.

The Council will work with schools who receive pupils from St Peter's Primary and Nursery School to develop their school travel plans to seek to mitigate against increased car use.

Sixth form provision

Not applicable to this proposal

Balance of denominational provision

Not applicable to this proposal

Rural primary schools

Not applicable this school is not a designated rural primary school.

Ownership of the site

The freehold of part of the site is owned by Brighton and Hove City Council, part of the site is leased to Brighton and Hove City Council with the freehold being owned by others.

Consultation

All applicable consultation was carried out prior to publishing this full proposal. Initially meetings were held between the Council, the Headteacher and the governing board.

A consultation document was prepared and issued on 7 November 2023. It was published online on the Council's website and was circulated to the parents, staff and governors of St Peter's Community Primary and Nursery School and to Headteachers of all schools in the city via the Council's weekly Schools Bulletin. It was also circulated to local Councillors and members of the Children, Families and Schools Committee, local Members of Parliament,

neighbouring Local Authorities and the two-diocese responsible for schools in the city. A copy of the questions posed and the text used in that consultation are attached as **Appendix 1** to this document (to be provided upon publication).

The document contained details of how comments on the proposal could be made and the closing date of the consultation, 22 December 2023. The duration of this period of consultation was 6 weeks 4 days.

During this consultation stage five public meetings were held – four in person at the school and one via Teams. A copy of the notes taken at the four fully open meetings are attached as **Appendix 2** to this document (to be provided upon publication). A presentation was given at this meeting by the Head of School Organisation. A copy of the presentation is attached as **Appendix 3** to this document (to be provided upon publication).

The results of this consultation were reported to the Children, Families and Schools Committee on 22 January 2024. At that meeting the decision was to proceed to the publication of the statutory notice and full proposal. A copy of the Committee report and Appendices is available at XXX (weblink to be provided upon publication).

Where and when the Statutory Notice and Full Proposal Information will be available

Brighton and Hove City Council will publish the statutory notice for this proposal on Tuesday 23 January 2024. Within four weeks of the date of publication any person may object to or make comments on the proposal ie until 5pm on Tuesday 20 February 2024. Copies of the notice will be published in the Argus newspaper on 25 January 2024. A copy of the statutory notice is attached as **Appendix 4** to this document (to be provided upon publication).

On 23 January 2024 the full proposal information (this document plus appendices) will be sent to the following recipients:

The Governing Board of the school
The Diocese of Chichester
The Diocese of Arundel & Brighton
Members of the Children, Families and Schools Committee
Local Ward Councillors
The Member of Parliament for Hove
The Secretary of State (schoolorganisation.notifications@education.gov.uk)

It will also be published on the council's website at the following address XXX (to be provided upon publication)

Any person may request a copy of the full proposal information either by writing to Head of School Organisation, Brighton & Hove City Council, Brighton & Hove City Council, Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove, BN3 3BQ or emailing schoolorganisation@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

How to make representation or comment on the proposal

Any person may object or make a representation or comment on the proposal either by responding to the consultation at XXX (to be provided upon publication) or by writing to Head of School Organisation, Brighton & Hove City Council, Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove, BN3 3BQ before the closing date of 20 February 2024 (by 5pm) or via email to schoolorganisation@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Following the closing date for representations, comments and objections, a report will be prepared for the Children, Families and Schools Committee to consider the proposal, In the event that closure is recommended a final decision will be made by Full Council to determine the proposal within 2 months i.e. no later than 9 April 2024. At the present time it is anticipated that the report will be considered at the Children, Families and Schools Committee on 29 February 2024 and Full Council on 4 March 2024.

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