

## **Brighton & Hove City Council**

### **Early Years and Childcare**

# **Middle Street Primary School Nursery Class Closure Consultation Report April 2017**

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## Introduction

Middle Street Primary School is a community maintained school with a nursery class which currently offers part-time free early education to three and four year olds (the early years free entitlement, EYFE).

From 7 March to 7 April 2017 Brighton & Hove City Council ran a public consultation about a proposal to close the school's nursery class with effect from September 2017 and as a result to raise the school's lower age range from three to four years.

Respondents could submit their feedback via a paper or online questionnaire, by email, phone or through a public consultation event on 30 March.

Twenty-seven people responded to the online questionnaire, eight people completed a paper questionnaire, seven people attended the consultation event and two responded via email. Some people responded by more than one method.

There was an overwhelmingly negative response; 85 per cent of respondents to the online and paper questionnaire said they 'strongly disagree' with the proposed closure of the nursery class.

## Main Findings from the Online and Paper Questionnaire

The main findings from the online and paper questionnaires submitted are summarised below. Comments also include those made by email.

- The majority, 85%, of respondents strongly disagreed with the proposal to close the nursery class
- 9% agreed (3% of these strongly agreed and 6% tended to agree)
- 70% of respondents were parents
- 29% of respondents had children at Middle Street Primary School class
- 50% of respondents were planning to send a child to the nursery class in future

## Questionnaire Responses

### Q1. Who responded

The table below shows the breakdown by percentage of those who responded. Some people responded in more than one way. No respondents said they were responding as a representative of an organisation.

Parent of a child at Middle Street Primary School nursery class	29%
Parent of a child/children not at Middle Street Primary School nursery class	41%
Staff at Middle Street Primary School	0%
Governor at Middle Street Primary School	0%
Manager/owner/staff person from other local childcare provision	0%
Headteacher/staff person/governor at a local maintained primary school	3%
Headteacher/staff person/governor at a local independent school	0%
Other, please give details below	24%
No Response]	3%

Of those who selected other, two said they were parents of children at Middle Street Primary School, one said they were a potential parent, three said they were friends of parents with a child at the school and one said they were a teacher.

## Q2. Respondents who agreed in principle to the proposed closure of the nursery class

Respondents were asked whether they agreed in principle to the closure of the nursery class and the raising of the lower age range from three to four.

The majority, 85 per cent, of all respondents said they 'strongly disagreed' with the proposal to close the nursery school. Three per cent said they 'strongly agree', six per cent said they 'tend to agree' and six per cent said they 'don't know not sure'.

Strongly agree	3%
Tend to agree	6%
Neither agree nor disagree	0%
Tend to disagree	0%
Strongly disagree	85%
Don't know / not sure	6%
No Response	0%

## Q3. Respondents' comments

Respondents were asked if there was anything they wanted to tell us about the reason for their answer and forty seven per cent did so.

Comments can be summarised as follows:

**Lack of choice of alternative provision** (n=5). Some parents wanted a state-run nursery in a non-faith school and felt that there was not anything else nearby.

*"My second child is due to attend Middle Street Nursery in September 2017. My family and I are deeply saddened Middle Street Nursery is being considered for closure, and if it does close we are struggling to find a suitable alternative Nursery attached to a state school that isn't a faith school, nor in the private sector that isn't primarily for childcare rather than early learning."*

*"Having looked at the alternative propositions of St Paul's or Mary Magdalen's, I am not at all happy with these options. They are both heavily religious Catholic schools and we are atheist and do not wish our children to have an enforced religious education. Plus we need to take up*

*the full 30 hour provision and having spoken to St Paul's, they are not offering this. And the timing would not work for dropping off and picking up both children from different venues, as already mentioned.*

**The high quality of nursery education** provision at Middle Street Primary School (n=5)

*"Our eldest daughter went to Middle St nursery and is now in yr1. She had a very positive experience there, quickly developed good reading skills and the beginnings of writing and numeracy."*

*"Middle Street is a wonderful nursery."*

*"Middle Street School Nursery is one of a kind and will be a huge loss to Brighton."*

**The ease/importance of their child's transition to school** if they attend the school's nursery class (n=5)

*"She made some great friends and had a smooth and happy transition to reception. We were very much looking forward to the same experience for our youngest daughter who is due to start at nursery in Sept 2017."*

*"Nursery schools and classes play a vital role in establishing children on their journey throughout school, the impact of which is felt long after they have left Primary school."*

**The convenience of having their youngest child at the same school as older siblings** (n=5)

*"... it will be very inconvenient for us to have to make a second daily drop-off / pickup from a different nursery provider."*

*"I can't express strongly enough how incredibly dismayed we are. Not only will our youngest not be able to attend nursery on the same premises, we will likely now struggle to find a nursery able to offer her 30hrs a week."*

**The disruption to the child or family** of having to find alternative nursery provision (n=3)

*"The nursery class should stay from three , and I do not want the nursery to close my daughter goes to middle street and I want my boy who is currently 7 months old to join when he is 3, if the nursery closes I will have to find childcare for him which wouldn't be convenient for dropping off and collecting my daughter."*

*"Little one (3 year old) doesn't want to go anywhere else because she only want to go to the same school as her older sister and she absolutely loves middle street nursery."*

**There are other options that have not been properly explored**

*"Closing the nursery is an easy solution, you could ask parents for voluntary donations, we can buy books and materials for our children, I'm sure you already though everything but is not enough."*

*"I think you should wait for the 30 hours free education ....I'm sure stay at home mums will bring their children to full time education as 15 hours in 2 or 3 days maybe is bit worth to find a job."*

*"Have you think in a community based Nursery class? if you open a charity just for the nursery class between all the Brighton and Hove community I'm sure we could fund the first years of full time nursery class."*

**Q4a. Who intended to send their child(ren) to the nursery class in future?**

Respondents were asked: "Before you heard about this proposal, were you planning to send a child to the nursery class in future?"

Fifty per cent (n = 17) said yes they were planning to send their child or children to Middle Street Primary School nursery class in future, 29 per cent (n = 10) said no they were not and 18 per cent (n = 6) per cent said they were unsure. Three per cent chose not to respond to this question.

## Q4b. How many children were respondents planning to send to the nursery class?

Parents were asked: “How many children were you planning to send to the nursery class in future?”

Fifty-two per cent of parents responded to this question. Of those, 15 parents said they were planning to send one child to the nursery class. One parent said they were planning to send two children to the nursery class in future.

## Demographics

### Age

Fifty per cent (n=17) of respondents gave their age. Of those, one was under 30, nine were between 30 and 40 years and five were between 41 and 50 years. There were no respondents over 50.

### Ethnic Origin

Thirty-two per cent of respondents were from a White UK ethnic background with a further 21 per cent from a White Other background. Three per cent gave their ethnic origin as Mixed – any other mixed background. Forty-four per cent chose not to respond to this question.

### Sexual Orientation

Forty-four per cent of respondents classified themselves as heterosexual/straight, three per cent as bisexual and three per cent chose not to say. Fifty per cent did not respond to this question.

## Religion

Twenty-one per cent of respondents had no particular religion or belief. Fifteen per cent defined themselves as Christian and another 15 per cent were atheist. Three per cent said they preferred not to say and 47 per cent did not respond to this question.

## Gender

Of those who gave their gender, 47 per cent of respondents were female and eight per cent were male. Fifty per cent said they identified with the gender they were assigned at birth and three per cent said they preferred not to say.

## Disability

No respondents said they had limitations in their day to day activities and 44 per cent chose not to respond to this question.

## Carers

No respondents said that they were a carer and 44 per cent chose not to respond to this question.

## Armed Forces

No respondents said they were currently serving in the armed forces, had previously served in the armed forces or had family and friends who were members of the armed forces. Fifty per-cent of respondents replied to this question.

## Consultation Event

A consultation event took place on 30 March 2017 at Brighton Town Hall. Seven parents and carers attended.

The head teacher of Middle Street Primary School explained the school's difficult financial situation, the low numbers of children attending the nursery class and said that they would need 35 children attending on a part-time basis to make the nursery class viable.

Parents asked whether the 30 hours free childcare offer would help increase numbers but the head teacher said this was not guaranteed as both parents need to be working to qualify for 30 hours free childcare and many parents work beyond the standard nursery hours (9am to 3pm term-time only). The school had looked into an after-school club which some parents wanted but this was not viable because of low numbers.

Parents said their children were upset that they would not be able to attend the nursery at the same place as their older siblings. They also expressed concern at the short notice given about the proposed closure saying this would not give them sufficient time to find alternative provision (by September 2017).

Parents also said there was little choice locally as they did not want their child to go to a faith school nursery, they felt the standard of care and education in private nurseries were poorer and that Turnerland nursery was too far to travel to. Parents were referred to the Family Information Service for local options.

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