

Full statutory proposal information for prescribed alterations to Middle Street Primary School

In accordance with the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 Brighton & Hove City Council proposes to make prescribed alterations to Middle Street Primary School with effect from 1st September 2017.

Local authority details:

Brighton & Hove City Council
Hove Town Hall
Norton Road
Hove
BN3 3BQ

School details:

Middle Street Primary School
Middle Street
Brighton
BN1 1AL

Middle Street Primary School is a community primary school for children aged three to 11. There are currently 212 pupils on roll in the main school and 16 in the nursery. The school includes a nursery class offering 50 part time places.¹

Description of the proposed alteration

To raise the age range of pupils for whom the school is registered from three to 11 to four to 11 years of age, and to close the school's nursery class.

Implementation date

It is proposed to raise the age range of pupils for whom the school is registered from three to 11 to four to 11 years of age, and to close the school's nursery class with effect from 1st September 2017.

Reason for the proposed change

Middle Street Primary School currently has a nursery class which offers 50 part time places for early years free entitlement (EYFE) for three and four year old children from the term after their third birthday, in accordance with children's statutory entitlement.

In recent years the nursery class has had a low number of children on roll which has meant that staff costs have not been covered by the funding received from the local authority for the EYFE.

¹ Statutory staff ratios allow for up to 52 children

Of the 50 part-time places occupancy for EYFE sessions has been as follows:

Term	Number of children on roll for EYFE sessions ²
Autumn 2013	26
Spring 2014	31
Summer 2014	35
Autumn 2014	20
Spring 2015	28
Summer 2015	33
Autumn 2015	23
Spring 2016	24
Summer 2016	27
Autumn 2016	13
Spring 2017	16

In addition the school has sold empty places to parents resulting in the following income amounts:

2016/17	£8,520
2015/16	£10,365
2015/14	£13,017

In financial year 2016/17 the total staff costs for the nursery were £73,648. Income from EYFE was £42,710, with additional income from sessions sold to parents of £8,520, making a total income of £51,230. This meant that there was a shortfall of £22,418. This does not include the cost of supplies and resources for the nursery, or a proportion of the school's overall operating and facilities costs.

This means that the rest of the school is subsidising the cost of the nursery. There is already pressure on the school's budget which is operating a licenced deficit.

Initial consultation process

At the Children, Young People and Skills Committee on 6th March 2017 it was agreed to start the process to close the school's nursery class and raise the lower age range from three to four. The committee paper is attached as Appendix 1.

A consultation document was published on the local authority's consultation portal and distributed to parents of children attending the schools. A public meeting was also held on 30th March 2017. The consultation document is attached as Appendix 2.

The consultation was publicised at a range of local venues; the poster is attached as Appendix 3.

Response to initial consultation

A report of the initial consultation is attached as Appendix 4.

Twenty-seven people responded on the council's consultation portal

² Based on the school's headcount returns to the local authority

Eight people submitted written questionnaires
Seven people attended the consultation meeting
Two people sent emails
0 people left telephone messages

Overwhelmingly people were not in favour of raising the school's lower age range to four and closing the nursery class for the following reasons:

- The high quality of nursery provision provided at Middle Street Primary school which is not replicated elsewhere
- Lack of alternative maintained nursery provision, in that the other local schools with nursery classes (St Mary Magdalen Catholic Primary School and St Paul's C of E Primary School) are both faith schools
- The ease of and importance of the child's transition to school from the nursery class
- The convenience of having the youngest child at the same school as older siblings
- The disruption to the child or family at having to find alternative nursery provision where a child would be continuing in the nursery in September 2017
- Lack of exploration of other options by the school; the possibility that there will be increased demand for places from September 2017 when working parents become entitled to 30 hours free childcare

A minority of people were in favour of closing the nursery class because of the pressure on the wider school budget.

The local authority values the quality of the nursery education provided by Middle Street Primary School and acknowledges the value that the nursery adds to the school as a whole. However, all early years providers who receive funding for EYFE follow the early years foundation stage. Quality of childcare provision in the city is high; according to Ofsted in Brighton & Hove 96% of early years childcare providers were rated as outstanding or good, compared with 93% in England as a whole³.

The transition of children from the nursery to the main school is also important where a child gets a place in the main school, although there are separate admissions criteria for the nursery and the school and so it is not guaranteed that a child attending the nursery class will also attend the main school.

Families whose children are already at the nursery class and will still be of nursery age in September 2017 will be supported to find alternative early years provision by the Family Information Service.

The school has publicised the nursery class and has also been very flexible in offering a wide choice of sessions to parents. It has also allowed parents to purchase additional sessions, but the income received from these has not been sufficient to make the nursery class viable. There are four children in the nursery class who will still be of nursery age in at the start of the new school year and six on the waiting list, making a potential roll of only 10 in September 2017.

³ At 31 December 2016

An estimated 46% of parents of three and four year olds across the city will be entitled to the extended entitlement of 30 hours free childcare from September 2017. However, working parents tend to choose full day care rather than the sessional care that is offered by Middle Street Primary School nursery class. The school has looked into offering wraparound care but does not feel that this is viable on the school's small site and with the low number of parents likely to take up the offer.

Where and when the statutory notice and full proposal information will be available

Brighton & Hove City Council will publish the statutory notice for this proposal on Friday 28th April 2017. The notice will remain in force for a period of four weeks i.e. until Friday 26th May 2017. Copies of the notice will be placed:

- at the entrance to the school
- in other places in the community; including Jubilee Library and Turner Children's Centre

It will also be published in the Brighton & Hove Independent newspaper.

A copy of the statutory notice is attached as Appendix 5.

On Friday 28th April 2017 the full proposal information (this document plus appendices) will be sent to the following:

- the governing body of Middle Street Primary School
- The school Organisation Unit of the Department for Education

It will also be published on the council's website at the following address www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/school-statutory-notice.

Any person may request a copy of the full proposal information either by writing to Tracy Goddard, Early Years and Childcare, Brighton & Hove City Council, Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove, BN3 3BQ or by contacting her on 01273 295382 or via email at eyc@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

How to make representations or comment on the proposal

Any person may object or make a representation or comment on the proposal. This can be done by writing to Vicky Jenkins, Childcare Strategy Manager – Free Entitlement, Early Years and Childcare, Brighton & Hove City Council, Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, Hove, BN3 3BQ before the closing date of 26th May 2017 or via email to her at vicky.jenkins@brighton-hove.gcsx.gov.uk

Following the closing date for representations, comments and objections, a report will be prepared for the Children, Young People and Skills Committee to decide the proposal. This report will be considered at their meeting on 12th June 2017.