

Brighton & Hove City Council

Special Children, Young People & Skills Committee

Agenda Item 61(a)

Subject: Rudyard Kipling School - Petition referred from the Public Engagement Meeting held on 16 December 2021

Date of meeting: 31 January 2022

Report of: Executive Director for Governance, People & Resources

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Ward(s) affected: All

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

1.1 To receive a petition presented at the public engagement meeting held on the 16 December 2021.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That the committee responds to the petition either by noting it or where it is considered more appropriate, calls for an officer report on the matter.

3. Context and background information

3.1 To receive the following petition:

Petitions

3.2 Keep Rudyard Kipling School Admissions Lead petitioner, Euan Hanington

Rudyard Kipling Primary School and Nursery (RKPS) is a popular and diverse community school, one with a growing reputation: we are part of the fabric of Woodingdean.

Ofsted classify us a 'good' although we classify ourselves as 'amazing'.

Brighton and Hove City Council (BHCC) are proposing that our Published Admission Number (PAN) be reduced from 60 to 45 from September 2023. We strongly contest this proposal.

As well as providing high quality provision for our wide range of families, we also serve as a Family Hub for parents and carers across Woodingdean. Our weekly 'Messy Mondays' and 'Family Fridays' sessions are immensely popular. The babies and toddlers who attend these sessions need school places. Were our PAN to be reduced, this might not be possible.

Here follow five reasons why we feel RKPS should be allowed to continue to flourish as a two form entry school:

1. We have a full Nursery: these children are the future of the school.

Our Nursery is a magical setting which provides provision for two, three and four year olds. **We are currently full.** Were our PAN to be reduced, parental choice could be restricted with parents and carers not able to send their children to RKPS because of the 45 pupil cap. With a reduction in PAN, it is quite possible that a sibling might not be able to gain a place at RKPS, even if their brother or sister were already at the school.

2. We provide invaluable support and education to disadvantaged children in the local area and beyond.

We are proud to serve some of Woodingdean's most disadvantaged families. We educate to a high standard - thus improving the life chances of - many of Woodingdean's most vulnerable children. **Over 31% of our families live in the 10% most deprived areas in England.** The local authority average is 11% and the national average is 10%. One recurring BHCC priority of recent years talks passionately about diminishing the difference in achievement between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children. To choose ourselves - and other schools also serving such communities - would not seem to fit comfortably around this objective.

Were such disadvantaged families unable to gain a place in our Reception classes, they would be hard pressed to travel to schools further afield with parental choice thus restricted. Transport links in this part of Woodingdean are limited due to our isolated location and families without transport would struggle to ferry their children to schools further afield.

3. The data does not take into account new housing developments and the high number of families moving into the area.

We argue that the BHCC data of predicted future Reception aged children does not take into account other important demographic trends such as families moving from West to East Brighton and families moving down to Woodingdean from farther away. We have families who choose (and would choose) to travel to RKPS from other parts of Sussex. Some other important information would not appear to have been factored into calculations, including the 45 residential houses development in progress in neighbouring Ovingdean, as well as the St Aubyns housing project in Rottingdean bringing an additional 48 residential homes. Many of these families, who might not wish to send their children to a Rottingdean faith school, would require RKPS as the school to educate their young children: their parental choice would be restricted with a reduction to our PAN.

4. We support, educate and nurture many children with special educational needs (SEN) in the local area.

We are immensely proud of the high quality provision we offer to Woodingdean children with special educational needs: 29% of our pupils receive SEN support. This compares with the local authority and national % of 13%. **Our SEN children make excellent progress.** In the last set of standardised data, 55% achieved the expected standard in reading (compared with 33% national), 45% in writing (24% national) and 50% in maths (36% national).

By reducing our PAN, the parental choice of SEN children would likely be restricted as many families with children with additional needs choose to send their children to RKPS because of our county wide reputation in this area.

5. In the name of equality, we ask BHCC to consult more widely with all schools across Brighton and Hove.

BHCC has previously requested that some much larger schools in less disadvantaged areas reduce their PANs. Most have said no. We ask that BHCC returns to these schools in its efforts to reduce the number of predicted surplus places in future years. Ourselves - and the other schools potentially affected - ask that other schools in a more advantageous situation reconsider and help us by 'doing their bit'.

