

Appendix 2

Full statutory proposal information for prescribed alterations to Hertford Infant and Nursery 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 Hertford Infant and Nursery School with effect from 1st September 2021.

Local authority details:

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

School details:

Hertford Infant and Nursery School
Hertford Road
Brighton, BN1 7GF

1. Introduction

Hertford Infant and Nursery School is a community school for children aged three to seven. There are currently 139 pupils on roll. The school includes a nursery class offering 26 part time places.

2. Description of the proposed alteration

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

3. Implementation date

It is proposed to raise the age range of pupils for whom the school is registered from three to seven years of age, to four to seven years of age, and to formally close the school's nursery class with effect from 1st September 2021.

4. Reason for the proposed change

Hertford Infant and Nursery School has a nursery class¹ which offers 26 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.

¹ Because of low numbers of children, from September 2020 nursery children have been in an early years foundation stage unit with reception children

Maintained schools receive a budget for their nursery classes based on the number of children who attend the provision. The hourly funding rate that Brighton & Hove receives from the government for EYFE for three and four year olds is the lowest of any unitary local authority in the south east, and this low rate of funding means that unless a nursery class is reasonably full throughout the year there will be pressure on the wider school budget.

Nursery attendance at Hertford Infant and Nursery School has been falling as shown in the table below.

Term	Number of children attending	Equivalent part-time attendance²
summer 2018	26	27
autumn 2018	19	20
spring 2019	23	24
summer 2019	25	26
autumn 2019	19	20
spring 2020	21	21
summer 2020	21 ³	23
autumn 2020	7	7

Because of Covid-19 the nursery class was not open in the summer term 2020 and so new parents did not apply for places, resulting in a significant drop in numbers for autumn 2020. The school is concerned for the future viability of the nursery class because there is no guarantee that numbers will increase over the year. While, in order to compensate for Covid-19, the DfE has agreed to fund nursery provision this autumn to the same extent as autumn 2019 this arrangement will not continue to spring 2021.

This means that fewer children in the spring and summer term will result in the rest of the school subsidising the cost of the nursery class at a time when there is other pressure on the school's budget.

5. Initial consultation process

At the Children, Young People and Skills Committee on 14th September 2020 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 school. People were given the opportunity to make comments by email. Public meetings at the school were offered on 28th September 2020 and 1st October 2020.

² Some children were eligible for the extended entitlement to 30 hours free childcare and so took some of their additional entitlement at the nursery class

³ This is the number of children who would have attended were the class not closed because of Covid-19

The consultation document was also shared with local venues including other early education providers.

The consultation document is attached as Appendix 2.

6. Response to initial consultation

A report on the initial consultation is attached as Appendix 3.

19 people responded to the online consultation

No-one left comments by email

No-one attended the public meetings

68% (13 people) strongly disagreed with raising the school's lower age range to four, all of who were current parents or future parents of children at the school.

The reasons given against closing the nursery class were:

- The nursery has a positive impact on managing children's transition to the school, including their emotional well-being. This was the most common reason given.
- The high quality of provision at the nursery, the fact that it provides a safe and nurturing space, and comparison with other local provision in that it is smaller, and non-denominational
- A concern that the closure of the nursery class could jeopardise the future of the school itself
- A desire to send younger children to the nursery in the future, having sent elder children there, and the ability to drop off/pick up siblings from the same location
- The fact that EYFE is free for 15 hours a week; this offer is more difficult to come by at private nurseries which tend to be more restrictive in their offer of free hours; some parents are not able to afford to pay for additional hours

A number of respondents commented that the nursery had not been publicised well-enough in the local community and that it should be promoted further before considering closure.

Of those who agreed with the proposal two were owners of other local early years provision, one was a staff member at Hertford Infant and Nursery School, and the other was a headteacher/staff/governor at other local school.

The respondents who gave a reason stated that the nursery could not remain open if it was not sustainable.

7. School and local authority response to the consultation

The local authority values the quality of the nursery education provided by Hertford Infant and Nursery School and acknowledges the value that the nursery adds to the school and community as a whole.

In response to the consultation the head teacher and governors state that ideally they would like to keep the nursery class open, but that they cannot afford to do so.

The nursery class has had low numbers previously and they believe that this is likely to be repeated. They feel that the low number of people responding indicates lack of interest in using the nursery class, which has been borne out by admissions numbers. They also feel that there is sufficient alternative provision locally.

The school has publicised the nursery class in the past, but this has not produced an increase in the number of applicants. There are only seven children on roll this autumn term 2020.

However, it should be noted that the latter is likely to be influenced by the process of consultation on closure.

Parents living in Hollingdean and Stanmer ward have other early education options open to them – two full day care and two sessional care providers, as well as childminders who offer EYFE funded places. There is also provision in neighbouring wards.

All early years providers who receive funding for EYFE follow the early years foundation stage. In Brighton & Hove early years settings rate highly for quality by Ofsted, with 98% outstanding/good compared with 96% nationally and 97% in the south east. In Brighton & Hove 25% of early years settings are rated outstanding, compared with 18% nationally and 19% in the south east.⁴

There are other early years providers in the city who offer “standalone” provision for 15 hours a week, without the need to purchase additional hours. There is provision of a variety of different sizes and also that which is non-denominational.

The transition of children from the nursery to the main school is 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.

Children of nursery age are currently in a foundation stage unit with reception children at the school. All current children will be of reception age from September 2021 and so will no longer require nursery provision. The nursery is not admitting any children who will still be nursery age in September 2021 to avoid their needing to transfer to alternative provision.

8. 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 6th November 2020. The notice will remain in force for a period of four weeks i.e. until Friday 4th December 2020. Copies of the notice will be placed on the school web page.

It will also be published in the Brighton & Hove Independent newspaper. A copy of the statutory notice is attached as Appendix 4 to this document.

⁴ At 31st March 2020

On Friday 6th November 2020 the full proposal information (this document plus appendices) will be sent to the governing body of Hertford Infant and Nursery School

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 by emailing Early Years and Childcare eyc@brighton-hove.gov.uk

9. 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 emailing Early Years and Childcare eyc@brighton-hove.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 11th January 2021.

