

Decision Maker: EDUCATION PORTFOLIO HOLDER

Date: Thursday 24 July 2014

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: BLENHEIM NURSERY PROVISION

Contact Officer: Jane Bailey, Assistant Director: Education
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Chief Officer: Executive Director of Education, Care & Health Services

Ward: Orpington;

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 The Portfolio Holder is asked to consider the outcome of the statutory consultation on the proposal to close the nursery at Blenheim Primary School.
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2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That the Portfolio Holder for Education approve the closure of Blenheim Primary School Nursery.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Not Applicable
 2. BBB Priority: Children and Young People
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: £10,000
 2. Ongoing costs: Not Applicable:
 3. Budget head/performance centre: DfE Basic Need Capital Grant
 4. Total current budget for this head: ££63,239,805
 5. Source of funding: DfE Basic Need Capital Grant
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional):n/a
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: n/a
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement
 2. Call-in: Applicable:
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): 5 children
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? No
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 Over recent years the nursery attached to Blenheim Primary school has experienced a reducing roll and a reduction in revenue which has reached a position where it is no longer covering costs. In an effort to reduce the cost to the school of running the nursery, the decision was made a couple of years ago to open in the mornings only. Despite these efforts, only five children were on roll during the Spring term 2014.
- 3.2 In April 2014, when the Primary school applications were received, it was apparent that there was a need for additional places in Planning Areas 7 & *(BR5/BR6 area). Analysis was undertaken as to the schools able to offer a bulge class for 2014/15 to meet this increased need. Blenheim Primary was identified as a possible site for a bulge class, and the school themselves were very keen to participate. They suggested that if they could close their nursery, they would have a classroom readily available, with the only costs being furniture, equipment and ICT, and they already had a teacher employed.
- 3.3 Places have been identified for the 5 children in the nursery at Blenheim Children's Centre nursery should a decision to close the provision be agreed. This is situated within Blenheim Children and Family Centre, and shares a site with the Primary school.
- 3.4 The statutory consultation was undertaken in line with the new guidance on school organisation. The process was carried out in line with the 'Prescribed Alterations Arrangements'. The school published their proposals during the week beginning 19th May 2014, with the formal consultation period ending on 23rd June 2014.
- 3.5 Representations were received from five parents at the school, who all expressed concerns about the proposal. Their responses are summarised in the table at **Appendix 1**
- 3.6 Parents expressed concerns were about the quality of learning which would be delivered at Blenheim Children's Centre Nursery, concerns that their children would find it difficult to adjust to this change, and worries that their children would find it more difficult to transition to school when the time comes. These concerns are taken seriously and the following information and actions should provide reassurance to parents that their children would continue to thrive under the proposed new arrangements:-
- The Nursery Manager has made contact with all parents concerned and, as the nursery is open during the summer holidays, can offer the children an opportunity to attend the nursery so they can get used to the new environment and settle in before starting the new term in September.
 - The Head Teacher at Blenheim Primary, and the Nursery Manager, will work closely together, especially at transition points, to make sure this is as seamless and stress-free as possible for the children concerned.
 - The Nursery is inspected by Ofsted under the same Early Years Foundation Stage framework as the school nursery. It was inspected in June 2014 and received an Ofsted grading of good. The report is attached at **Appendix 2**. Inspectors commented that :-
'Staff use assessment and planning effectively to help all children, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, to make good progress in their learning and development.'

'Overall, the quality of teaching is good and staff demonstrate they know the children well and help them to learn, develop and achieve.'

3.7 Conclusion

3.8 The proposed arrangement will provide much needed school places in the Orpington area, with no detriment to the education of those children currently attending the school nursery, who can access high quality early education provision at alternative nursery provision on the same site. The recommendation is therefore for the Education PDS to approve this proposal so that the new arrangement can be implemented for September 2014.

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Local Authorities have a duty to secure sufficiency of school places, and sufficiency of Free Early Education places

5. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 No redundancies are proposed in respect of this proposal, and no additional staff will be required to assimilate the children into the new nursery.

Non-Applicable Sections:	Financial Implications, Legal Implications.
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	[Title of document and date]