

The Report on Brickhill Lower School consultation on changing the school age range from 2017 onwards

December 2015



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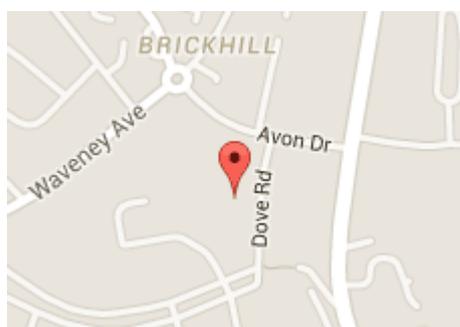
- Consultation Report

Section 1

The Governing Body of Brickhill Lower School is now in a position to report on the outcome of consultation regarding:

Brickhill Lower School's consultation on changing the school age range from 2017 onwards.

Brickhill Lower School is situated in the town of Bedford: MK41 7AA



The URN is 109503

The DfE number for Brickhill Lower School is 822/2163

Brief history

The buildings of Brickhill Lower School were built in 1960 as part of the growing neighbourhood known as the 'Birds area'. The school was then called Brickhill County Infants School and had its official opening day was on Thursday 5th October 1961. However, the school opened to children on 6th September 1960 at 9.00am with 64 children on roll. It consisted of three classes, one of which was a Reception Class. The first Headteacher of the school was Miss Kathleen Derbyshire.

In 1993 the adjoining Brickhill Middle School merged with Parkwood School to form Beauchamp Middle School. The surrounding area was then sold for housing development but Brickhill Lower School retained a large playing field, several playgrounds and an environmental garden.

In 2010 Brickhill Lower School celebrated its 50th anniversary with a huge pageant held in the Great Hall at Bedford School.

55 years later, as the Brickhill Parish community has grown, so have the number of children on roll and we now have just under 300 children, 2 classes per year group including 2 at foundation stage.

Alteration proposal to the age range

It is proposed that Brickhill Lower School will extend its age range from a 4 to 9 years Lower School to a 4 to 11 years Primary School.

Implementation and stages of implementation

The proposal will be implemented on 1st September 2017.

- In September 2017 – Year 4 children will have the option to remain at the school and become a new Year 5
- In September 2018 – Year 5 children will remain at the school and become a new Year 6

Capacity

The current capacity of the school is 300 pupil places and the school currently has 279 pupils on roll.

Following implementation, the proposed number on roll will eventually **decrease** to 210.

Currently, our admissions are managed by the Local Authority (Bedford Borough). Places are allocated based on the admissions criteria, which take into account various factors such as catchment area, whether there are siblings at the school or whether the child is 'looked after'. The school will be reducing the number of children in each year group from 60 to 30. However, there are no proposals to change any of the other admissions criteria for the school.

In September 2017 a new Year 5 will be created and in September 2018 a new Year 6 will be created to enable pupils, who would have had to leave the school at the end of Year 4, the opportunity to remain at Brickhill School.

Objectives of our proposal to change the age range are:

- To provide for continuation of the curriculum, whereby we can ensure continuity within Key Stage 2 without having to consider the interruption of transition at the end of Year 4.
- Within the national curriculum (that we chose to follow) we can ensure there are no gaps in what the children are taught.
- Whole school planning can map the progress of curriculum subjects all the way to year 6 ensuring the foundations built lower down the school are carried through allowing all

children to continue working in an environment that completes their entire primary education in one setting.

- To sustain high standards of education and maintain the nurturing and well-being of children by:
 - nurturing our children and helping them work towards their aspirations in an environment they are used to
 - providing a values based, Primary focused learning environment to the end of Year 6
- To offer children in Years R - 6 an exciting and innovative curriculum provision that meets their needs and supports them to achieve their full potential.
- To increase parental choice with regard to the variety of options and opportunities that are being offered.
- To avoid an additional transition; ensuring that the provision at Brickhill Lower School links seamlessly with other local providers.
- To help drive up standards in Bedford Borough and meet the local area vision for development including the progress for vulnerable groups.
- To aide teacher recruitment and retention as fewer and fewer authorities have three tier and teachers are trained for the two tier system

Consultation

An informal consultation process was carried out between 9th November 2015 and 18th December 2015; the outcome of this is outlined in this report. Attached is a copy of the consultation document.

Who did we inform?

We informed and invited comments from a wide range of stakeholders and the wider community through a number of approaches. The major consultees were:

- Bedford Borough Council
- Parents of every registered pupil at the school
- Parents of potential pupils in our catchment area and in Early Years provision
- Staff who work at the school
- Our local communities and our current site users
- All other schools within Bedford Borough
- The Church of England and Roman Catholic Dioceses
- Anyone else who has an interest in the proposal

A public meeting was held for parents and stakeholders:

23rd and 25th November 2015

A staff meeting was also held at Brickhill Lower School with teachers, teaching assistants, office staff, site agent and domestic staff invited.

An electronic version of the consultation was placed for all stakeholders and interested parties on the school website. We spoke to pupils about the process in Assembly and the School Council held a discussion.

Implementation

The context of the implementation is part of the wider plan by Bedford Borough Council, the Local Authority, that is currently consulting on facilitating a two-tier system of education in the Borough, commencing in September 2017. The Borough already has a number of primary and secondary schools currently operating.



The Report on Brickhill Lower School's consultation on changing the school age range from 2017 onwards.

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The purpose of this section of the proposal is to:

- Provide detailed information about the responses to the consultation process;
- Respond, in particular, to the areas of concern that have been raised as part of that process;
- Identify how the Governing Body will meet the objectives for changing the age-range, as set out in the consultation process.

The consultation with stakeholders covered a single proposal:

In September 2017, should Year 5 pupils remain at Brickhill Lower School, Dove Road, Brickhill, Bedford and move into Year 6 in 2018?

The Governing Body invited, through the consultation, responses to the following specific proposals:

- From September 2017 – Year 4 pupils should remain at Brickhill Lower School and move into a year 5 class and then into year 6 in 2018. Brickhill Lower School's age range changes from 4 to 9 years to 4 to 11 years

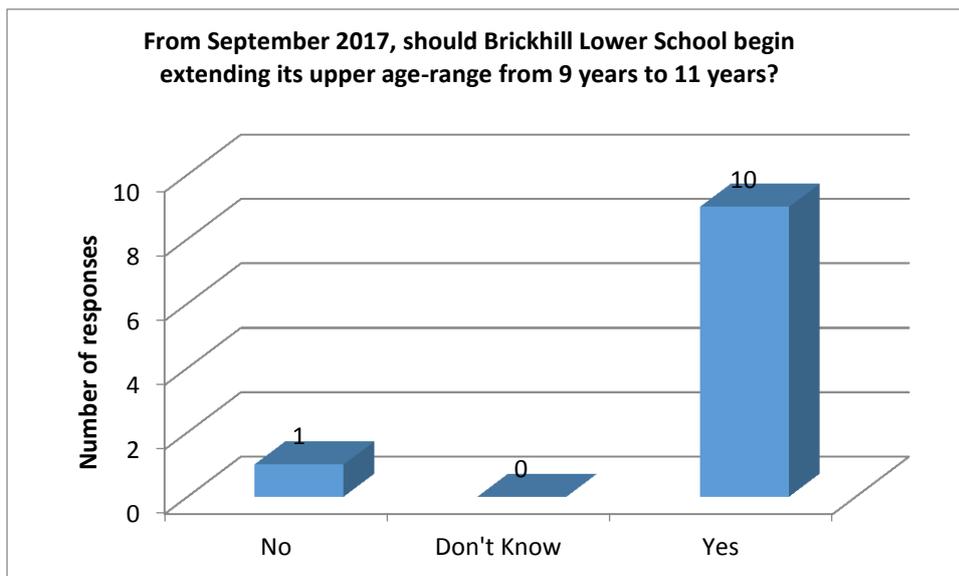
Summary of responses

A total of 21 written responses were received for the proposal plus some verbal questions and responses that arose from the 17 people who attended the two consultation events. In terms of this report, there will be an indication of the responses received in graphical form and a commentary derived from the specific feelings that respondents made.

The report will then detail:

- Areas of concern
- The school Governing Body's responses to comments raised through the consultation process

Proposal



Of the 11 people who expressed a firm opinion in this way, whilst the vast majority were in favour of the proposal (10/0/1), some of those people expressed concerns about certain elements. These are detailed below, together with the governors' response to those concerns:

Areas of Concern

There were many positive responses about the standard of education at the school and statements in support of the proposal.

Written responses:

The following are verbatim concerns raised in relation to the proposal. The key issue of each concern is highlighted in bold print. Where this general concern is repeated by another respondent, the number of times is shown in brackets (e.g x1):

- As a parent with a pre-school child, I'm worried that, as I live outside the Brickhill school catchment area, **my child might not get a place at the school** (due to the drop in intake numbers). This is important to me as I have an existing child at the school. Will I get more of a chance of getting my youngest child a place because I have an existing child already in the school? (x2)

Governors' response – Following a review of the school's existing admissions criteria which included a comparison to the criteria of Bedford Borough and other similar local schools, it was agreed that the school's current criteria, which already gives siblings preference above other out of catchment children, are appropriate and should not be changed. If, in future, the school opens a nursery then the admissions criteria should be reviewed in light of that development.

- My concerns are whether the facilities currently at the school and planned in the two new classrooms will adequately replicate the more **specialised facilities** available in middle schools. I want my child to be using facilities such as science and DT labs, sports hall, PE equipment, art rooms, music facilities, bike sheds, and a library, of the size and standard that is currently available to year 5 pupils in middle schools.(x2)

Governors' response - The curriculum taught currently in middle schools in the borough is the same national curriculum that is taught in primary schools in the vast majority of other boroughs across the country (over 95% of children in the country attend primary schools). The governors were therefore satisfied that the school could deliver the national curriculum to years 5 and 6 without having specialist facilities such as science labs. Governors feel it is important that this fact should be clearly communicated to parents and other stakeholders. There was also a clear understanding that resources would be needed for facilities and equipment to support the transition to a primary school, and that investment from the school's own budget would be needed, as well as effort to secure appropriate funding from borough and any other external sources.

- A concern I have is that I have a child currently at middle school who is able to make his own way to school and back as he has done since year 5 because there is no requirement to have a physical hand over of child to school by parent. If the current hand over arrangements in place at BLS are continued into **years 5 and 6 our children lose the opportunity for early independence** – is there a proposal here to have different arrangements? (x2)

Governors' response - Whether children are dropped off / collected is a matter of parental preference. The school would need to communicate carefully with parents to ensure appropriate and safe arrangements that take account of parents' wishes are put in place (e.g. a Year 6 child could walk home independently but the school would feel it inappropriate for a year 6 pupil to be responsible for taking home a Year R child.) The governors were satisfied that these issues could be dealt with in a way that would satisfy the concerns raised.

- I do not believe that the school has the **physical capacity** for 360 children, even with 2 additional classrooms. The IT suite, library, assembly hall, and playgrounds are not adequate for this huge increase in numbers and this will be to the detriment of the pupils, who will be overcrowded and denied **fair access to facilities**. Also, will facilities such as the library and IT be able to upgrade to accommodate these extra two years – will the funding be available for this?

Governors' response – The school will have a maximum of 360 children at the height of the transition, which is only an additional 60 pupils to what it has currently. As the Nest is an 'extra' classroom, and with the two additional new classrooms that the Borough will be providing, it has been calculated that the school can adequately accommodate 360 children. The school will monitor hotspot times such as lunch time, and will consider staggering lunch and assemblies if deemed appropriate. The school has already started investing, and will

continue to invest into new material e.g. books, online subscriptions and equipment suitable for years 5 and 6.

- I am concerned about job security and what will happen when the number of children fall and **less staff are needed**.

Governors' response: The 'BBLE' (a Borough initiative) is developing a recruitment and retention website to ensure staff are retained within the borough. As the transition will take place over a number of years it is not envisaged that compulsory redundancies would be necessary, rather that the eventual reduction would be achieved through a natural turnover of staff. As retention of good teachers is always a challenge, the school will give careful thought to professional development and other ways of encouraging valued staff to stay. It is felt that the addition of years 5 and 6 could provide an exciting opportunity for staff to extend their skills and range of teaching practice.

- Has anyone thought about the **car-parking issues** for a school with 360 pupils (number at the height of the transition period)

Governors' response - The school will work with the Local Authority to look at safety crossings and other appropriate traffic control measures. The school could also consider allowing pupils onto the playground (under supervision) from 8.30 a.m. to allow for a longer drop off period, which could ease congestion. The situation would be reviewed and steps taken when needed.

Verbal responses:

The following are non-verbatim concerns raised in relation to the proposal and were heard at the two face to face consultation sessions held at the school. Only comments that are not covered above are included, however a written copy of the questions and answers discussed at both of the sessions are available upon request.

- Parents had asked about what provision would be made for older children in terms of equipment.

Governors' response – It was mentioned that the new trim trail already installed is suitable for use by year 5 and 6 pupils. Provision will be made in the school budget for purchasing other equipment as needed. Caterlink is responsible for providing chairs and other equipment in the dining hall and therefore would be obliged to provide appropriate equipment for older children. The issue of space at lunchtime was discussed, with the proposed solution being a staggered lunchtime. Bigger toilets will be installed in the new classrooms.

- Education journey – which secondary schools would we feed into?

Governors' response – As far as the school is aware, there are currently no plans for the borough to change the catchment areas, other than that Castle Lower is moving outside of the catchment system. It was felt that there would be a wide range of good secondary schools that pupils might move on to, but that which school pupils moved to, would be a matter of parental choice. The school is currently in talks with Head Teachers at local secondary and soon to be secondary schools and will work closely with them to ensure a well-supported transition for Brickhill children. It is noted that many current lower/ primary schools are allying themselves with a particular secondary school and there was a discussion about the pros and cons of doing so. The picture for future secondary provision is currently too unclear for Brickhill to limit itself to developing a close relationship with any particular school. It would be better to develop positive relationships with a number of schools and that parental choice would remain the driver that determines the future path of Brickhill pupils.

- Changes to the school site – will it be ready on time?

Governors' response - It is the responsibility of the Local Authority (LA) to deliver the additional classrooms needed to support the transition to a two tier system. The LA has made a commitment that all work will be completed by September 2018 and has promised the school that in the event it moves to primary status it will receive two additional classrooms and additional car-parking. The school already has some existing spare capacity in the Nest. Other funding for further development of facilities may be available and the governors were keen that all options in this regard were explored.

- Parents were concerned that the current Years 3s, who would be the first pupils to be retained for year 5 would be a guinea-pig year and wanted to know how the school would ensure that standards would continue to improve for this cohort.

Governors' response – It is normal practice for there to be a constant focus on standards and quality of teaching and that the first year 5 would be no exception. The school is also aware that an Ofsted inspection will be due in 2017 and as this year would produce the school's first Key Stage 2 SATs results in 2018 (a key point of accountability for a primary school) it is likely that this cohort would benefit from a particularly close focus and therefore would actually be a showcase year.

- Breakfast and After School Club – will more places be made available as the school expands?

Governors' response - Provision for breakfast and after school club has recently been expanded to 30 places. If the need arises the school would look at making additional places available. The limiting factor is physical space, rather than staff numbers, so it would depend on space available on the site. The school would keep the situation under constant review.

- When will there be a nursery?

Governors' response – The school hopes in future to open a nursery, but this would not be feasible until the later stages of the transition when the larger year groups move into the secondary phase and more classroom accommodation becomes available. Another possibility would be to establish a relationship with an existing local nursery or to invite a local provider to run a nursery on the school's site. The introduction of nursery provision would require careful consideration and governors agreed that as the school's priority is the

existing pupils, we should not rush into such a decision.

- What if the numbers of pupils drop in Year 5 and 6? How will the school manage this?

Governors' response - The school would review the situation and deal with reduced numbers accordingly as and when the situation arose. Fluctuations in pupil numbers are something the school is used to dealing with. Governors discussed that some parents may not currently have a clear understanding of the options that will be available to them for year 5 and 6 places (in that it will no longer be possible to send their child to a middle school in year 5) and therefore, it was deemed that there is not a great risk of a significant drop in numbers. Governors agreed that the best strategy is to focus on providing a high quality primary education so that parents choose to keep their children at the school.

- Does the school have funding to support the transition?

Governors' response - Funding has been allocated by the Local Authority and the school has a capital budget which can be used to support changes to the school required by the transition. The budget would be allocated according to the school's priorities at the time. The school would also explore any and all available funding from other sources.