

Formal Consultation to lower the age range of Bridlewood Primary School to 2-11
From 1st September 2019

Bridlewood Primary School is situated on Chartwell Close, Swindon. There is currently capacity for 270 pupils at the school, the proposal to lower the age range of the school to include early years provision will see the total capacity rise to 322 pupils.

This consultation is regarding the proposal to lower the age range of Bridlewood Primary School to 2-11 from 1st September 2019.

The school is currently graded 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted following an inspection in January 2018. The Early Years Provision and Effectiveness of Leadership and Management was graded as 'Good'.

Why are we proposing to lower the age range?

The introduction of a school nursery will further strengthen the quality of education provided at the school by achieving better outcomes for children who will have access to a qualified teacher from the age of 2. The schools' aim is to operate the maintained nursery provision for extended hours to better meet the needs of working families. The school plans to open the nursery provision the same hours as the school is currently open to better meet the needs of families who have children in both the school and the nursery as pick up and/or drop off times would be in line with each other. Demand will be gauged from parents for offering sessions in line with the schools breakfast and after school clubs.

Prior to the initial 'inadequate' Ofsted judgement in July 2017, conversations had been taking place with the school regarding establishing a nursery on site to help meet local need. Bridlewood Primary School is in an area where there are currently insufficient places due to increased demand as a result of the 30 hours free childcare policy and housing growth locally.

Drawings were produced to design a nursery build on the school site. However these plans were put on hold to allow the school time to focus on rapid quality improvement, with the introduction of a new Headteacher and support from the school improvement team within Swindon Borough Council to drive the school away from the 'inadequate' judgement back towards 'Good'. Whilst the school is currently overall graded 'requires improvement' the turnaround in such a short space of time is evidence of the commitment and drive of the school. The Early Years Provision of the school is now graded as 'Good'. The Governing Body of the school, the senior leadership team and Swindon Borough Council agree now is the right time to revisit these plans.

Whilst there is no guarantee that children attending the nursery will gain a place at the school, those who apply and are successful in gaining a place in the reception class will have benefited from being pupils of the school from a much earlier age. The school would like the opportunity to have educated these children directly from the start of their early education entitlement meaning a smoother transition into the school should the decision be made by parents to apply.

The Childcare Act 2016 placed a duty on local authorities to secure 30 hours of free childcare for working families with 3 and 4 year olds from September 2017. To meet the increased demand this policy has created, Swindon Borough Council are required to ensure additional places are available and that they can offer greater flexibility to working families.

Across the Borough, the early year's education and childcare places are provided by a total of 284 small and large nursery chains, independent nurseries, preschools, maintained primary schools and childminders.

At present, there are 28 maintained primary schools delivering early years education for 3 and 4 year olds across the Borough. Of these, 15 schools also deliver 2 year old funded education. There are a further two primary academies proposing to lower their age range to open maintained nursery provision from January 2018 which will take the total to 30 primary schools delivering early years education in Swindon. This will equate to an increase of 13 schools over the last 4 years now delivering early years provision in Swindon.

Despite this growth, Swindon remains in the bottom three local authorities with the lowest proportion of preschool children with access to provision with a qualified teacher across the county based on Department for Education statistical release; Education provision: children under 5 years of age, January 2018.

Steven McIntosh, Save the Children director of UK Poverty, said, 'Children who start behind, stay behind. But high-quality childcare, led by graduate early years teachers, can ensure children are ready for school. All of our little ones should have access to nursery care led by an early years teacher. Without action, we'll be letting down our next generation.' (August 2018).

In July 2018, the Department for Education (DfE) announced a capital bidding round of £30 million to create new high-quality school-based nursery places for 2, 3 and 4 year olds to deliver the government's commitment to build more school-based nurseries, and to boost social mobility. The Department stated that 'the first few years of a child's life are critical to shaping their future development, and our ambition is to provide equality of opportunity for every child, regardless of background or where they live, because we know that good early years education is the cornerstone of social mobility.' This announcement was in line with the Government's commitment to increase the number of early years places delivered within primary schools following previous Ofsted recommendations.

Ofsted have previously reported that 'It is widely accepted that progress in early years for children from low income backgrounds depends on attendance in the highest quality settings. The only early education provision that is at least as strong, or even stronger, in deprived areas compared with wealthier areas is nursery schools.' Furthermore, a direct recommendation of the report was that 'the Government should promote the expansion of nursery schools into those local areas where they are not currently present – in particular disadvantaged areas - to raise quality and improve outcomes both through direct provision of places, and system leadership of the local early years sector.' It was also a recommendation that where a nursery school was established then 'It should be a priority to make the best possible use of the maintained nursery schools to deliver 2-year-old places, in preference to lower quality settings.'

It is widely acknowledged that a primary school, which also has a nursery provision achieves better outcomes for children.

Swindon Borough Council is keen to respond to these recommendations by encouraging more primary schools to establish their own maintained nursery classes to include 2, 3 and 4 year olds which in turn will mean more children are able to access high quality maintained nursery provision with a qualified teacher, improving their outcomes throughout life.

What are the reasons for the proposed change?

There are many reasons why we are proposing to lower the age at Bridlewood Primary School. The main ones are summarised below:

1. The proposals are in response to recommendations made by Ofsted, Department for Education and Save the Children to encourage more primary schools to establish their own maintained nursery classes to include 2, 3 and 4 year olds, allowing more children to access high quality provision with a qualified teacher, improving their outcomes throughout life.
2. There are increasing pressures across the borough to provide additional early year's places due to new housing developments and the introduction of 30 hours of free childcare. Bridlewood Primary School has a long term vision to offer sessions more in line with full day care provision with consideration for all year round sessions if there is sufficient demand.
3. Children will become pupils of the school, allowing access to Early Years Provision with a 'Good' Ofsted rating and whilst there is no guarantee of a place within the school from reception, those children who are successful in applying for a school place will be used to the school environment, teacher staff and ethos. Education will be provided by a qualified teacher improving individual pupils early learning and development opportunities.
4. Staff appointed to work within the maintained nursery class will have access to training alongside colleagues across the whole of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and vice versa. There may be opportunities to work within all year groups sharing experience benefiting children throughout the school.

How will the proposed change benefit pupils of Bridlewood Primary School?

If the proposal is approved, the change could bring many benefits for pupils. The main ones are summarised below:

1. Bridlewood will be able to build upon the high quality education provided for their current pupils between the ages of 4-11.
2. There will be opportunities for continuity for pupils who choose to enrol for primary provision at Bridlewood Primary School, to remain in an environment with which they are familiar - from early years through to year 6 should they wish. Existing networks will be in place and they will be taught by teachers who know them well and have developed relationships with them from a young age.

3. Pupils who attend Bridlewood Primary School and Nursery will not be disadvantaged when deciding on their transition to primary education. They will have the same choice as those in other early years provision in Swindon – to apply to stay on at Bridlewood if they wish to, or to apply for another institution if they feel it more suited to individual needs

4. With the additional space created by the building, there will be an opportunity to expand the current provision for after school childcare and therefore increase the number of places we can offer across the school for our working parents.

What are the potential issues arising from the proposed change?

There will be challenges to address before a nursery provision can be opened, these include;

1. The space will need to be created and building work will need to be managed on the school site so as to cause minimal disruption to the current pupils' learning in the school and have the project completed in time for September 2019 opening.

2. Recruitment will need to commence to ensure high quality teaching staff are in place in advance of September. If the proposal goes ahead, adverts will go out in Summer term 2019 to ensure appropriate staffing is in place for the start the new academic year 2019/2020. Bridlewood Primary School will manage this process as part of their usual safer recruitment guidelines

Submission of feedback to the consultation

It is important that all stakeholders and other interested parties are given the opportunity to express their views in order for the Local Authority to consider these before making a final decision. **The consultation period will begin on 24th September 2018 – 19th October 2018.** The purpose of this document is to provide you with information and to give you the opportunity to express your views.

Feedback can be given online;

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Bridlewood2018/>

You can also email any comments or questions you may have to:

nurseryconsultation@swindon.gov.uk

no later than midnight on Friday 19th October 2018.

All responses to the consultation will be reported to and considered by a Cabinet Panel in November 2018.

We welcome your feedback.

Swindon Borough Council, Education Department

What are the next steps?

24th September 2018

Consultation period starts

19th October 2018

Consultation closes

November 2018
14th November 2018

Consultation analysis report circulated
Cabinet Panel to make final decision

If decision is made to go ahead with the proposal:

1st September 2019

The school's age range is lowered and early years aged children being accessing maintained nursery provision.

Consultation List:

- Students on roll at Bridlewood Primary School
- Parents of pupils on roll at Bridlewood Primary School
- Staff at Bridlewood Primary School
- Head teachers and Chairs of Governors of all Swindon Primary Schools
- Swindon's 2 MPs
- Local Councillors
- Any other local community groups that might be affected by the proposal
- Any other interested party