

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SUNDERLAND**NOTIFICATION OF STATUTORY PROPOSAL FOR THE DISCONTINUATION OF
MILLFIELD COMMUNITY NURSERY SCHOOL****Local Authority Proposals and Contact Details**

Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, that it is the intention of Sunderland City Council, Civic Centre, Burdon Road, Sunderland, SR2 7DN to discontinue (close) the following school:

- **Millfield Community Nursery School, Bell Street, Sunderland SR4 6JR** with effect from 31 August 2019.

Millfield Community Nursery is a nursery school maintained by Sunderland City Council.

Implementation.

- Millfield Community Nursery School is proposed to close with effect from 31 August 2019.

Reason for Closure of Millfield Community Nursery School

Millfield Community Nursery School has become financially vulnerable in recent years. The Nursery has an operational budget deficit that has increased year on year since 2015. In that time the nursery has restructured the staffing base on three occasions. However, neither staffing restructure nor attempts to increase pupil recruitment have been sufficient to resolve the nursery's budget deficit. The nursery's financial deficit is projected to increase further in future years, impacting further on the nursery's ability to offer a good provision in a safe and secure environment and remain operational.

The nursery has a capacity of 125 nursery aged pupils. As of the January 2019 Census there were 55 nursery aged pupils on roll. 54% of the available places at the nursery were unfilled.

Millfield Community Nursery has projected that 24 places will be required for the Autumn 2019 cohort. This equates to 21% of the nursery's capacity.

Despite increased demand for nursery places in the Millfield Ward the number of families seeking places at Millfield Community Nursery School has fallen in recent years. Between Spring 2017 and Spring 2019 there was an 8% increase in demand for nursery places in the Millfield ward. However, over the same period demand for places at Millfield Community Nursery School fell by 15%.

Data demonstrates an increasing preference within the local community for nursery places within a school setting as opposed to attendance at a maintained nursery school. In the Millfield Ward in Spring 2017, 38% of local children were attending Millfield Community Nursery School in comparison to 62% attending a nursery setting within one of the two local primary schools. In Spring 2019 the proportion of children attending Millfield Nursery had fallen to 30% with 70% attending a nursery within a primary school.

Effect on other Schools, Academies and Educational Institutions in the Area

The proposal to close Millfield Community Nursery School will result in the displacement of children under statutory school age attending the nursery from September 2019. This will result in increased demand for places at neighbouring nursery schools, primary schools with nursery provisions and day-care/ childminders. Further information is included under 'Displaced Pupils'

Millfield Community Nursery School, as a local authority-maintained nursery, is a recipient of a yearly lump sum payment, allocated to all local authority-maintained nurseries in Sunderland. The lump sum payment is calculated on the total number of pupils attending local authority-maintained nursery places in the city. Currently the cumulative sum is distributed equally across all nurseries regardless on how many pupils attend those settings.

As one of five Sunderland Nursery Schools that receives a greater allocation from the lump sum than is generated through its own pupil numbers, assuming the total lump received in 2020/21 is consistent with that received in 2019/20, the closure of Millfield Nursery School will result in an increase in the overall lump sum allocated to every other local authority-maintained nursery school in the city in 2020/21.

Project Costs

Financial requirements because of the proposal to close Millfield Community Nursery School include £0.041m to meet staff redundancy requirements, to be funded via the Dedicated Schools Grant Redundancy Reserves, and a minimum of £0.084m related to the current nursery deficit (as of April 2019) to be funded via Council reserves.

Pupil Numbers and Admissions

Given the nature of maintained nursery provision numbers on roll are subject to some fluctuation. The numbers included below are from the January 2019 School Census

Number	55
Age Range	2 - 5 years old
Boys	24
Girls	31
SEN	9

Displaced Pupils

It is anticipated that, of those pupils currently on roll, twenty pupils will transition from nursery provision to a school reception class in September 2019.

Discussions with neighbouring schools and academies have identified that alternative nursery places will be available for a number of pupils anticipated to be on roll at Millfield Community Nursery in the immediate vicinity of Millfield Community Nursery School, i.e at Diamond Hall Infant Academy.

Both Diamond Hall Infant Academy and St Joseph's RC VA Primary School have planned works

that will further expand the current nursery provisions at their respective sites. It should be noted that those planned works pre-date, and are therefore not associated with, the Council's proposal to discontinue Millfield Community Nursery School.

January 2019's local Childcare Sufficiency Assessment identified that within one mile of Millfield Community Nursery School there were 43 vacant 2-year old nursery places and 155 vacant 3 – 4-year-old nursery places at good or outstanding providers. Within 2 miles of the setting there were 63 vacant 2-year old nursery places and 190 vacant 3 – 4-year-old places at good or outstanding providers.

It is therefore considered that sufficient good or outstanding local alternative nursery places exist to accommodate both the current cohort of children attending Millfield Nursery School and any projected future cohorts of children who may seek to attend the school in future years.

Local parental preference in the area is increasingly towards admission to nursery provisions as part of a school setting. Since 2017 the percentage of parents seeking a maintained nursery place has fallen by 8%. The Local Authority has therefore calculated alternative school nursery places, in addition to good or outstanding maintained nursery places, within the surplus provision that is within a 1 -2 mile radius of the current Millfield Community Nursery School.

While Millfield Community Nursery currently has 9 pupils on roll who have been identified with SEND there is no specific SEN expertise within the nursery for these pupils. It is therefore anticipated that the level of support available will be of equal or greater quality in any other good or outstanding nursery provider in the area.

Impact on the Community

Millfield Community Nursery School is considered locally as a community asset. 33% of those responding to the Council's pre-publication consultation identified as residents. This was a greater proportion than the 28% who identified as parents of children attending the nursery.

The closure of Millfield Community Nursery School would result in the removal of a Good nursery provision from the local area. However, it is noted that there are sufficient alternative local nursery places at good or outstanding schools with nursery provisions or maintained nursery settings to enable residents from within the community to access suitable alternative early years provision.

The Nursery building is in the ownership of Sunderland Council. There is currently no projected use for the building should this proposal be implemented. However, there remain opportunities to seek an alternative educational use for the building post September 2019.

Balance of Denominational Provision

There would be no impact on the balance of denominational provision as the Nursery does not have a religious character.

Rural Primary Schools

Millfield Community Nursery School does not fall within the categorisation of a rural primary as set out in Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Furthermore, the school is not listed on the DfE's List of Designated Rural Primary Schools 2018.

Maintained Nursery Schools

This proposal is for the discontinuation of an existing maintained nursery provision. The Statutory Guidance 'Opening and Closing Maintained Schools' (November 2018) identified the presumption against closure of a maintained nursery school. The Guidance states that this does not mean that a nursery will never close, but the case for closure should be strong and should demonstrate that:

- plans to develop alternative early years provision clearly demonstrate that it will be at least equal in quantity to the provision provided by the nursery school with no loss of expertise and specialism; and
- replacement provision is more accessible and more convenient for local parents.

Due consideration has been applied to those circumstances within this proposal

Of those families currently attending Millfield Community Nursery at January 2019 Census 93% live closer to at least one other good or outstanding setting with a nursery provision than they do Millfield Nursery School with 52% living closer to 3 or more good or outstanding settings than Millfield Community Nursery School. Local alternative provision available to parents is at least comparable with that available at Millfield Nursery School. Alternative provisions identified as within a shorter walking distance for those living closer to 3 or more alternative settings but on roll at Millfield Community Nursery Schools include

Setting	Proximity to Millfield Nursery	Ofsted Inspection Outcome
Diamond Hall Infant Academy	0.2 miles	Good
St Joseph's RC Primary	0.2 miles	Good
Barnes Infant Academy	0.8 miles	Good
St Mary's Childcare Centre	1.0 mile	Outstanding
Highfield Primary Academy	0.8 miles	Good
Sunshine Daycare	0.8 miles	Good
Little Learners	1.3 miles	Good
Apple Blossom Nursery	0.6 miles	Good
Richard Avenue Primary School	1.0 mile	Good

In addition to the alternative academies, maintained schools and private nursery providers in the local area there are also two additional maintained nursery schools within 2 miles of Millfield Nursery School. They are;

- Pennywell Early Years Centre – 1.6 miles
- Hylton Red House Nursery School – 2.0 miles

Both have been judged as Outstanding by Ofsted in their most recent inspections.

Sixth Form Provision

Not applicable - There is no provision for students aged 16 to 19.

Special Educational Needs Provision (SEND)

Millfield Community Nursery School is not designated as a provider of Special Educational Needs Provision. This proposal will not result in the discontinuation of SEND provision in Sunderland.

Travel

The Council has considered the impact of travel within this proposal. It is considered that there is suitable alternative provision to that currently offered at Millfield Community Nursery for those parents currently on roll. Data indicates that 93% of parents currently accessing Millfield Community Nursery School live closer to an alternative Good nursery provision than Millfield Nursery while 50% of those currently on roll live closer to at least three alternative good early years providers.

Consultation

An informal (pre-publication) consultation upon the proposals took place during the following dates:

- 10th April 2019 to 31st May 2019

Consultees recommended in the relevant statutory guidance were consulted via a Consultation Document that was made widely available on the Council's website and PRU websites. Consultees included parents, staff, pupils, local schools and academies, early-years providers, the local ward councillors and staff representatives (unions).

Two parent events were held at Millfield Community Nursery School on 7th May 2019. Staff briefings took place at Millfield Community Nursery on 4th April 2019.

Submission of Objections and Comments on Proposals

A copy of this proposal can be viewed on the Sunderland City Council website at

<https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/13038/School-organisation-consultations>

It can also be requested via:

E-mail: alan.rowan@sunderland.gov.uk

Telephone: 0191 5611372

Post: Retained Education Functions Lead, Civic Centre, Burdon Road, Sunderland, SR2 7DN.

Within four weeks of the Publication Date below, any person may object to or make comments on the proposals by sending their written representations:

By e-mail to :-

schoolorganisation@sunderland.gov.uk

Or by post to :-

Alan Rowan

Retained Education Functions Lead

Civic Centre

Burdon Road

Sunderland

SR2 7DN

Signed : Patrick Melia,
Chief Executive,
Sunderland City Council.

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