

Divisions Affected – ISIS

DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

6 NOVEMBER 2024

AGE RANGE EXTENSION OF GRANDPONT MAINTAINED NURSERY SCHOOL

Report by Director of Children's Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Cabinet Member is RECOMMENDED to approve the age range extension of Grandpont Maintained Nursery School down from 3-5 to 2-5, from 1 January 2025.**

Executive Summary

2. The Governing Body of Grandpont Nursery School have reviewed the delivery model of their nursery and linked childcare provision. They propose that funded 2-year-old places should be included on the nursery school roll and no longer under governors' community powers.
3. Age range changes for community nursery schools require a statutory consultation and decision-making process. The decision must be made in accordance with the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and decision makers must have regard to the statutory guidance, "Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools", October 2018 ("the Guidance"). The Regulations require that the LA should decide a proposal within two months of the end of the Representation period, otherwise it will fall to the Schools Adjudicator.
4. A statutory notice (Annex 1) and Statutory Proposal (Annex 2) have been published, and the required representation period ended on 18 October 2024; a decision is therefore required by 18 December 2024, if it is not to fall to the Schools Adjudicator. While the Governing Body can propose this change, the decision-maker is the local authority.

Introduction

5. This report follows the publication of a Statutory Proposal/Notice (Stage 1) and a Representation (Stage 2 formal consultation) period relating to the county council's 'prescribed alteration' proposal to expand the age range of Grandpont Maintained Nursery School. The proposal is made with the support of the school's leadership team and Governing Body. The Cabinet Member is now required to decide on the proposal in accordance with the statutory prescribed alteration procedures.
6. Further details of the proposal are provided in the Statutory Proposal, Annex 2.

Background

7. Grandpont Nursery in Oxford is one of seven maintained freestanding nursery schools in Oxfordshire. It's most recent Ofsted inspection in 2022 graded the nursery as Good.
8. Admissions to the nursery school are governed by Oxfordshire County Council's Nursery Schools Admissions policy. 104 part time equivalent places were available in the 23/24 academic year, offering both universal 15 and extended 30 hour funded places to children aged 3 and 4 years.
9. Grandpont Childcare also operates within the same site and buildings as the nursery school. It has a separate Ofsted registration and is open each weekday, from 8am to 6pm, all year round. It provides full or sessional day care, with the addition of wraparound care during term time in the form of a breakfast club and after-school club. The most recent Ofsted inspection in 2022 resulted in a Good grading.
10. The Childcare provision offers places for children from the age of 10 months and above. These are offered under the Governors' Section 27 community powers and children are not on the nursery school roll.
11. The Governing Body has reviewed the provision on site and propose to extend the nursery school age range down to 2-year-olds. The nursery is seeing increased demand for term time only funded places for this age group, and it will streamline admissions to have children on the nursery roll at age 2. Extension of the school age range would aid the long-term sustainability of a nursery school that provides high quality teacher-led provision within the heart of Oxford city.
12. Grandpont Nursery will review their number of year-round places and offer some funded provision for the 9 months to 23 months age group. This new entitlement for working families is part of the Government childcare strategy and introduces 15 hours of funded childcare for children from 9 months old, starting in September 2024. The entitlement was expected to extend further to 30 funded hours a week for eligible children from September 2025 but is subject to confirmation by the new Government.

Objectives and expected outcomes

13. Under Sections 6 and 7 of the Childcare Act 2006, Oxfordshire County Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare available to enable families –
 - a) to access the funded entitlements for their child
 - b) to take up, or remain in work, or
 - c) to undertake education or training which could reasonably lead to work
14. The proposed age range extension to the nursery would:
 - Create Council-maintained spaces for funded 2yr olds
 - Be supportive of delivering high educational standards and parental choice.
 - Provide better term time only continuity of provision for families with younger children.

15. The Council's most recent assessment of sufficiency for funded childcare places indicates that in September 2025 there will be a 30-place deficit for 2-year-olds in the Oxford Grandpont and New Hinksey Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA), therefore demand for the proposed places is expected to be good.
16. The proposal is not expected to affect other providers within the area as it is largely a change in governance and not creating new places. Due to the new working parent childcare entitlements Council officers expect growth in demand generally and are supporting providers to review and extend their offer to support this change.

Financial Implications

The following financial implications have been checked by Jane Billington, Strategic Finance Business Partner, Financial and Commercial Services. Contact: jane.billington@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

17. There are no capital costs for implementing the proposal. The school will continue to use the spacious purpose-built building, which fully meets the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage (January 2022).
18. Revenue costs will be covered by termly headcount funding claims through the Council's Early Years Portal.

Legal Issues

The following legal implications have been checked by Paul Grant, Head of Legal. Contact: paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

19. The proposals set out in this report involve a legal process which the Council has followed, including statutory consultation. The recommendation for a change of category results in a change of legal status for the school.
20. A change of category is covered by The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 ('the Prescribed Alterations Regulations') which should be read in conjunction with Parts 2 and 3 and Schedule 3 of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 (as amended by the Education Act (EA) 2011) and the Prescribed Alterations Regulations.
21. The proposed change is subject to the "Guidance", as set out in "Making Significant Changes ('Prescribed Alterations') to maintained schools" last updated January 2023. This Guidance is for proposers and decision-makers. The Guidance states that the statutory proposal must contain sufficient information for interested parties to make a decision on whether to support or challenge the proposed change. The proposal should be accessible to all interested parties and should therefore use 'plain English'. The full proposal must be published on a website (e.g. the school or LA's website) along with a statement setting out:
 - how copies of the proposal may be obtained;
 - that anybody can object to, or comment on, the proposal;
 - the date that the representation period ends;
 - and the address to which objections or comments should be submitted.
22. A brief notice (including details on how the full proposal can be accessed e.g. the website address) must be published in a local newspaper. Within one week of the date of

publication on the website, the proposer must send a copy of the proposal and the information set out in the paragraph above to the Governing Board and any other body or person that the proposer thinks are appropriate.

23. The representation period must last for four weeks from the date of the publication. During this period, any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal to the LA to be considered by the decision-maker. It is also good practice for representations to be forwarded to the proposer to ensure that they are aware of local opinion.

Staff Implications

24. There are no staffing implications to this proposal. This proposal would utilise existing qualified and experienced staff with a solid understanding of child development.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

25. Reflecting their location in deprived areas, previous evidence has shown that maintained nursery schools deliver services to a higher proportion of vulnerable children and families than other Early Years providers (Early Education, 2015). These include children who are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), have English as an Additional Language (EAL), have Special Educational Needs (SEN) or are from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds. According to Blanden et al., 2017, maintained nursery schools are more likely than other provider types to be used by FSM children, children from disadvantaged areas and EAL students.
26. Maintained nursery schools are required to have a qualified Early Years Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) teacher who provides support, advice and training for non-expert staff to support high quality early education and care for children with SEN. Maintained nursery schools also have SEN policies and accessibility plans (Butler, 2016).
27. Early Education (2015, p.11) highlighted that one of the key differences between the maintained nursery school sector and other early childhood education & care provision is the extent to which the maintained nursery school sector is able to support disadvantaged children and families through bespoke programmes, often providing outreach into the home. This aspect of the maintained nursery school sector, which connects the child and the family within the community to promote a “joined up approach” for effective learning through an “open culture”, is a notable attribute of many maintained nursery schools (Callanan et al., 2017, p. 52).
28. Early Education (2015) recommended in its ‘Maintained nursery schools: the state of play report’, that priority should be given to maximising take-up of high-quality provision in nursery schools, for the most disadvantaged children including funded 2-year-olds.

Sustainability Implications

29. Extension of the school age range would aid the long-term economic sustainability of a nursery school that provides high quality teacher-led provision within the heart of Oxford city. Local authority sufficiency data indicates need in the local area need has shifted away from term time only provision for 3–4-year-olds towards all year-round care. The nursery school’s linked provision, ‘Grandpont Childcare’ is increasing its capacity to offer more all year-round spaces. However, new government funding initiatives have also increased the demand for term time funded spaces for 2-year-olds.

30. Economically sustainable early education and childcare is an important contributor to social sustainability in improving access to education, reducing inequality and supporting community cohesion.
31. The change in age range should deliver positive environmental sustainability impacts by reducing travel distances to local education provision.

Risk Management

32. There are no risk management issues.

Consultations

33. A statutory notice (Annex 1) and Statutory Proposal (Annex 2) have been published, and the required representation period ended on 18 October 2024.
34. Two responses to the consultation were received. Both strongly supported the proposal.

Lisa Lyons
Director for Children, Education & Families

Annex 1: Statutory Notice

Annex 2: Statutory Proposal

Background papers: Nil

Contact Officer: Jane Maharry, School Organisation Service Manager.
Email: jane.maharry@oxfordshire.gov.uk

November 2024



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

Annex 1

PUBLIC NOTICE

Proposed Change of Age Range at Grandpont Nursery School from 3-5 to 2-5

Notice is given in accordance with [The School Organisation \(Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools\) \(England\) Regulations 2013](#) that Oxfordshire County Council, working with the Governing Body of Grandpont Nursery School, intends to make a prescribed alteration to Grandpont Maintained Nursery School, Whitehouse Road, Oxford, OX1 4QH effective from 1 January 2025.

The Local Authority, working with the governing body of the nursery school is proposing to extend the age range from 3-5 years to 2-5 years.

This Notice is an extract from the full proposal, which can be viewed at letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/grandpont-nursery-extension-of-age-range. Copies can also be requested by emailing school.planning@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this Notice, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to Local Authority using the online feedback form on the above website, or by email to the above address.

Signed: Lisa Lyons, Director of Children's Services

Publication Date: 20 September 2024

Annex 2



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

FULL STATUTORY PROPOSAL

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations
2013

Change of Age Range at Grandpont Nursery School from 3-5 to 2-5

1. School and LA details

School: Grandpont Maintained Nursery School

Address: Whitehouse Road, Oxford, OX1 4QH

Local Authority: Oxfordshire

2. Description of alteration

Oxfordshire County Council, working with the Governing Body of Grandpont Nursery School proposes to extend the age range of Grandpont Nursery School from age 3 to 5 down to age 2 to 5.

3. Evidence of demand

Under Sections 6 and 7 of the Childcare Act 2006, Oxfordshire County Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there is sufficient childcare available to enable families –

- d) to access the funded entitlements for their child
- e) to take up, or remain in work, or
- f) to undertake education or training which could reasonably lead to work

The Council's most recent assessment of sufficiency for funded childcare places indicates that in September 2025 there will be a 30-place deficit for 2-year-olds in the Oxford Grandpont and New Hinksey Medium Super Output Area in which the nursery is located.

4. Objectives

The proposed alteration would:

- Create teacher-led spaces for 2yr olds
- Be supportive of delivering high educational standards
- Provide better term time place continuity and choice of provision for families with younger children
- Improve the financial viability of the nursery school

5. The effect on other educational institutions within the area

The proposal is not expected to affect other providers within the area as it is largely a change in governance for a small proportion of the childcare provision delivered on site. Due to the new working parent childcare entitlements, Council officers expect growth in demand generally and are supporting all providers to review and extend their offer to support this change. The proposal is therefore in line with this agenda.

6. Project costs and funding

There are no capital costs related to this proposal as the Nursery already has suitable space and capacity for 2-year-olds in the existing building. No new staff are required but increased revenue costs will be supported through the normal termly headcount return and place-funding payments

7. Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation

The nursery proposes to admit 2-year-olds onto the school roll from 1 January 2025, with no further implementation stages.

8. Objections and comments

Comments or objections must be received by the local authority by **18 October 2024**

Respond by:

using the online questionnaire at <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/grandpont-nursery-extension-of-age-range>

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- or emailing school.planning@oxfordshire.gov.uk (*please quote 'Grandpont Nursery age range consultation' in the header*)
- handing in a written response at the reception office of Grandpont Nursery School
- posting a written response to **Emma Daisley, Access to Learning, Oxfordshire County Council, 4th Floor, County Hall, Oxford OX1 1ND**

9. Decision-making

The decision-maker for this proposed expansion is Oxfordshire County Council. The decision will be made by the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Young People's Services at a meeting which is open to the public and publicised on the county council's website. The decision must be made within a period of two months of the end of this representation period and is currently expected on **Wednesday 6 November 2024**.