



FULL STATUTORY PROPOSAL

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

Closure of The Ace Centre Nursery School

1. School and LA details

This proposal published by:

Local Authority: Oxfordshire County Council

Address: County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

School: The ACE Centre Nursery School

Address: Burford Road, Chipping Norton, OX7 5DZ

2. Outline of proposal

Oxfordshire County Council, working with the Governing Body of The ACE Centre Nursery School, proposes to formally close the nursery school.

The Ace Centre Nursery School is located on the Burford Road in the centre of Chipping Norton and is one of 7 maintained nursery schools across Oxfordshire.

It is a freestanding 39 full-time equivalent place nursery providing school hours term time only provision for 3–5-year-olds and admits 2 years-olds under s27 Governor powers.

This proposal follows significant challenges faced by the nursery including a sustained and substantial reduction in pupil numbers, which has affected its financial and educational viability. Oxfordshire County Council is committed to ensuring that alternative early years' provision remains available locally to minimise any impact on families and the wider community.

3. Implementation

It is proposed to formally close The ACE Centre Nursery School at the end of the 2025/2026 school year on 31st August 2026.

4. Reasons for closure

There have been significant changes in leadership over the past four years with a new Headteacher and Governing body. The Headteacher resigned during the Autumn term of 2025 and left on 31st December.

Currently the school is judged to be outstanding. In October 2023, the school had a Section 8 inspection and although the grade of outstanding remained the same, evidence suggested 'that the overall grade may not be as high as this if it had been a Section 5 inspection'. This resulted in the school becoming a focused Strategy school. Quality improvement support and challenge was provided by the Local Authority to ensure the school made rapid improvements.

Numbers on roll indicate that demand has been decreasing over the last three academic years, partly because of demographic changes and due to extended childcare entitlements for working parents with children 9 months to 4 years. Consequently, we have observed wider changes in the childcare market, with take-up patterns and parental choice shifting according to parental needs and market response.

Low pupil numbers in any school term mean that the funding the Nursery School receives is correspondingly reduced. This in turn means that it is difficult for the school to maintain the building and cover running costs, both elements of which are relatively high in older buildings.

A maintained nursery school must have a headteacher, and nursery sessions must be run by at least one qualified teacher. Funding of places is determined in compliance with the Government's School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2025.

Government guidance is that a maintained nursery school can be closed if:

- There are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils, and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium or long term.
 - There are more nursery places than needed in the Chipping Norton area. The birth rate is steady, and the number of young children isn't expected to increase in the short to medium term, so if The ACE Centre Nursery School closes, there will be sufficient nursery places available locally.
- It is no longer considered viable.
 - The school's pupil numbers are too low to generate sufficient funding to cover the costs of leadership, staffing and maintaining the building. The school has a significant budget deficit.

5. Pupil Numbers and Admissions

There are more nursery places than needed in the Chipping Norton area (surplus 41 places for 2-year-olds and surplus 116 places for 3-year-olds). The birth rate is gradually trending downwards, and the number of young children is expected to decrease in the short to medium term. Demand is predicted to fall as set out below:

Funded places forecast demand in local area (part time equivalent places)

	2025	2028
2-year-olds	101	92
3-year-olds	110	96

At the time of the initial informal consultation in November 2025 there were only 23 children on roll. All but 5 children left the Nursery by the end of December 2025.

The Governing body has decided that remaining open for such a small number would not be viable and not offer the best provision for these children.

The Nursery School has consequently temporarily closed to children from January 2026. Families have been successful in accessing alternative places and support has been offered for those remaining on roll, with the expectation that places will be offered with no break in provision.

6. Displaced Pupils and impact on the community

In making this proposal, the local authority has considered the statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers relating to opening and closing maintained schools; specifically:

Plans for alternative early years provision clearly demonstrating that replacement provision will be at least equal in quantity and quality, with no loss of expertise or specialism and how the new provision will be more accessible and more convenient for local parents.

- The alternative early years provision includes school-based nursery settings offer both term-time places and wraparound care. Additionally, parents have the option of full-time care from several settings. This provides a wide range of parental choice in settings as best meet their needs with good standards as evidenced by Ofsted inspection.
- Vacancy data indicates immediate availability of places in Chipping Norton. Several providers have potential to expand, subject to demand, and this will create more viable provision for any future demographic growth.

Therefore, impact on the community is expected to be minimal as most families have already identified suitable alternative provision. While any requirement to change provider may be unwelcome, early years settings are used to and skilled at supporting new children.

7. How to submit your views

If you wish your view to be considered when the county council decides on this proposal, it is important that you submit a response through this statutory representation process, even if you have already responded to the informal consultation held in November/December 2025

Comments or objections, or statements of support, must be received by the local authority by **midnight 9th February 2026**.

Respond by:

- Using the online questionnaire at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ace-nursery-closure
- Emailing school.planning@oxfordshire.gov.uk (*please quote 'Ace Nursery Closure' in the header*)
- Handing in a written response at the reception office of The Ace Centre Nursery School, Burford Road, Chipping Norton
- Posting a written response to **School Organisation & Planning, Oxfordshire County Council, 4th Floor County Hall, Oxford OX1 1ND**, marking your envelope ACE Nursery Closure

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8. Decision-making

The decision-maker for this proposed closure is Oxfordshire County Council. The decision will be made by the Cabinet Member responsible for Education 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 17th March 2026.