

PROPOSED CHANGE OF AGE RANGE FOR AYLESHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL AND THE CLOSURE OF THE MAINTAINED NURSERY CLASS

Summary of the Public Meetings held on 10 December 2010

The key issues raised are summarised below with responses from the Head of Early Years and Childcare in italics.

Approximately 30 people attended the public meeting including parents, staff, governors, the local member, members of the parish and district council and other interested parties.

Martyn Doole the Area Children's Services Officer outlined the background to the proposal explaining why it was being brought forward. The maintained nursery class and the neighbourhood nursery operate together as the Sunshine Corner Neighbourhood Nursery. Now that the neighbourhood nursery funding has ended it is becoming increasingly difficult to operate in this way as a viable provision. The proposed closure of the maintained nursery class would enable the Neighbourhood Nursery to receive the full nursery education funding and ensure its sustainability. There would be no loss of places for 3 to 4 year olds and the free entitlement would continue.

Abigal Birch the headteacher of Aylesham Primary School had anticipated what the Aylesham community would want to know:

Why has this proposal come forward?

- Not possible to sustain both maintained class and neighbourhood nursery as they are currently run
- Neighbourhood Nursery funding has come to an end
- Bidding for extra funding to continue to operate
- Sustainability not guaranteed
- Long term solution is being sought

Why cannot just the school run the nursery?

- The school is not funded to do this.
- The school would not be able to provide for toddlers and babies.

What other solution could there be?

- Parents take on the neighbourhood nursery
 - There would still be the same financial problems and parents would have to bid for funding to sustain the nursery
- No-one has been able to put forward an alternative sustainable solution.
- The Pre-School Learning Alliance (PLA) is a non-profit making organisation who put funding back into their provisions.
- The PLA has a national pricing system.
- The provision would not change under this proposal.
- Transition for the children moving from the nursery into the school would still be in place.
- The school would continue to work with the nursery to monitor the quality of the provision.
- Family learning opportunities would continue.

- The child/adult ratio would improve (currently 1:13 but would be 1:8 under this proposal)
- There would be qualified teacher input and highly trained staff.
- The current qualified nursery teacher employed by the school for the maintained nursery class would transfer to the primary school. The nursery assistant currently employed by the school would transfer to the employ of the PLA.
- Everyone is confident that the PLA would continue to provide a good level of care for the children of Aylesham.

Chair of Governors

The governing body unanimously support the proposal.

Pre-School Learning Alliance

- The PLA is a charitable organisation experienced in running community groups and directly managing pre-schools and nurseries.
- The ethos of the nursery is set with the community.
- If the neighbourhood nursery element of the Sunshine Corner Neighbourhood Nursery closed there would not longer be day care provision.
- This proposal offers more flexibility as parents could choose to use their free entitlement and pay for increased session times.
- The free entitlement could be spread over 52 weeks.
- Parents would have more choice.
- The dedicated staff are part of the community.
- If this proposal went ahead the nursery would be sustainable at a level the local community could afford.

The following points were made at the meeting

What would happen if the PLA had to close the nursery at a later date?

Is this a cost cutting exercise?

The children of Aylesham must come first.

If in the future the PLA were unable to run the nursery and it had to close, KCC could consult on opening the maintained nursery again if that was what the community wanted. KCC has a statutory obligation to ensure that adequate provision is in place to meet the statutory requirements for the Children's Centre.

There would be no cost saving for KCC. Funding from KCC for the free entitlement either for the maintained nursery class or the PLA is still the same funding.