

**Minutes of Virtual Public Meeting of Primary School Admission  
Arrangements September 2022 at Stanford Infants  
Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November 6:30 – 8pm**

RB from LA opened the meeting and welcomed everyone who had joined the meeting through 'Teams'.

A Primary School Title Slide for Admissions from Sept 2022 was displayed followed by slides explaining the maximum number of children who can attend the school from Sept 2022 and the process the Council will follow to determine the need for reducing admissions before making a final decision.

There is an on-line Consultation Response Form to be completed and, for those who do not have on-line access, a phone number available where comments can be taken down over the telephone.

The Council is under pressure to reduce the numbers and it is a requirement that they hold a consultation between 1 October and 31 January of the school year before arrangements can apply and must be determined before 28 February 2021.

The current annual intake for Stanford Infants is 90 children and it is proposed to reduce this to 60 children from Sept 2022 therefore there will eventually be fewer classes and therefore fewer teachers and support staff in each year group and the school will fall from approx. 270 children to approx. 180 children. As the size of the school reduces so does the budget for the school and this will have to be managed during the transition in numbers. Although this change to 60 children will be seen as permanent, there is flexibility for the Council to work with the school to allow for additional children in the school if necessary. Looking across the City, it is forecast that by 2022 there will be over 500 unfilled spaces being 19% of capacity, the Department for Education expect 5-10% of capacity taking into account children who might move into the City outside usual admission times but also to allow for some parental preference. There will be new homes in the City and the Council has calculated how many children will require a school place against the number of expected new homes and we predict the numbers can be met with the reductions we are proposing. However, there will always be spikes within our predictions and we are talking about taking away places not accommodation so there will be the opportunity to increase class numbers. This is important around discussions about the movement of families in and out of the City, particularly in the light of the Covid situation and flexibility of working from home.

Slides were shown on what is happening in the City.

RB then invited questions.

**Comment: An explanation was needed to understand how the forecast for numbers was obtained and was there anywhere the information can be seen.**

RB advised the numbers were taken from the NHS giving the number of children registered with GP surgeries in the City, which would indicate the number of children needing a school place. Year on year approximately 90% of children registered require a school place.

**Comment: More information on how a forecast is made is requested.**

RB - We know how many children are living in the City for each academic year group and base data on this. The data tables are publicly available and a link will be given.

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The forecast for each year is publicly available and *the* methodology for the data process had been inspected by an Independent Consultant who had agreed with the system. Further data information is being published and will also be available.

**Comment: It was asked, as mentioned previously, if the reduction in numbers goes ahead and it would be possible to add pupils on a case-by-case basis, how would this work if staff numbers had been reduced.**

RB - It would not be on a case-by -case basis. For example, the admission round closes mid-January, if at that point there is a cluster of children who could not be offered a school a place within a reasonable distance from home, the Council would be having a discussion with the Head Teacher and Governors of the school to put in an additional class and working with them to ensure sufficient staff are recruited for the September. There would be from Jan and April to offer places and agree an extra class. It is appreciated that this would not be ideal from a school's point of view particularly for recruitment within a short timescale.

**Comment: On a budgetary level, how will the additional costs be managed, will there be flexibility in the funding as budget already set for 2 form entry school.**

RB - There is a methodology within the budget called the School Growth Fund which would mean the school getting funding earlier than they would normally get it due to increase in numbers from September which had not been planned for.

**Comment: It was stated that the Council starting from the position of not closing schools is why the cuts are spread out the way they are, how was this decision made and is it open for discussion as it seems odd to cut places that are oversubscribed in order to keep places that are undersubscribed. Also, whether the balance of secular schools against religious schools is taken into consideration as Stanford is the only secular school within reasonable distance for many who feel a secular school meets their values.**

RB - The Council is admission authority for Community Schools not for Academy or Free Schools. Although the Council works closely with Catholic and C of E diocese, they cannot determine what happens to published admission numbers with those schools and, although they share information and discuss difficulties, they cannot dictate what happens in those schools. They can only put forward proposals for Community Schools and are obliged to make sure all children have a school place obviously there is the ability for parents to request a preference, be it a large school, small school, a church school etc. but no guarantee that these can be accommodated for. There will be those who wish for a secular education and we believe there will be sufficient capacity across the area to provide that. However, the balance between getting it right is what we need to hear from people, with the concerns that they may not be able to have the type of school they wish for. The other point around closing a school: there are many considerations to be made, there are logistical issues about closing a school within a period of time; how do you stop disrupting the education of the children already at the school also part of this consultation is about the balance of having a range of schools across the City able to meet the challenges of fewer children versus having an impact on one or a few schools individually. As a Council the whole picture is being looked at across all the schools and ensuring the fewer children coming through and number of unfilled places does not disproportionately affect some of those schools and only way we can do that is some schools will have less children. The Council needs to hear whether they have that balance right or not and there is a 2 Stanford Infant School – School Admissions Consultation PM Meeting

question about closing schools in the Consultations and this leads to discussion about demographic and it is expected that the demographic will continue to drop and more places may need to be reduced in the future.

**Comment: First would like to comment that the attendance tonight demonstrates the passion of the parents of Stanford Infant School. It is noted that, after calculation, the mean average of intake over the last 5 years is 234 and now proposing to drop to 180, why has Stanford been identified as having reduced PAN.**

RB - Responded with next slides to give information on children that are at the school and made the following comment on the data. It is recognised that Stanford Infant is a popular school with admissions reaching their capacity in January 2020 irrespective of the number of children within their admission area.

**Comment: Living over the border in Hove, BN3 6 postcode and being aware of an awful lot of new construction that has been approved within the city plan, including a vast number of flats nearby, how does this map into the planned reduction in PAN for Stanford Infant School given the scale of the planned construction.**

RB - Of the 11,000 units of accommodation we are aware of, we know that half of those are going to be in the major developments within the city. However, some of them will not be described in that way, for example, building in back gardens, knocking a house down, and will be hard to identify. Therefore, only major projects can be used to plan for the number of children requiring a school place not individual developments. The GP data and the housing data is looked at and a view taken and ultimately feel a school place can be offered to everyone who needs one even if the PAN is reduced.

**Comment: Parents in BN1 6 postcode can easily walk to school and Westdean not close by or even near Stanford. The only other secular school close by is underperforming and all others are faith schools which not our choice. Postcode is therefore a flawed method of planning.**

RB - It is what we need to hear that people who live outside the BN1 5 postcode find Stanford Infants very accessible.

**Comment: On the BN1 5 postcode, with the GP in BN3 interested in mapping of GP surgeries as seems a blunt tool to work out where people will send their child. Moved to BN3 and can walk to school, would have struggled to find a secular school in the area. Do you map current pupils and where they live as Stanford does sit in an epicentre across a lot of different post codes. Also to look at information from GP surgeries as do not always reflect post codes of patients.**

RB - When information received from GP surgeries they are given the postcode of the children registered and this is used for plotting. With the other point raised, a map is displayed showing central city mapping area and a table data linked to post codes that comes from GP surgeries showing number of children requiring school places in different years.

**Comment: Based on map, why not including BN3 6 postcode.**

RB - Planning area approved by Dept. for Education and have to maintain consistency year upon year to make forecast. That is how planning area built and is approved.

**Comment: Do you look at percentage you are missing from the prediction say, 30% of school from BN3 , is this taken into account.**

RB - A table is shown with summary of information with number of children in Reception and closeness from school.

RB - The consultation needs views on whether the Council should allow children to travel further as their parents wish them to attend a particular school, or ensure the supply of places available is lined up with the number of children living in proximity of the school, or ensure parents should have a range of schools they are able to state a preference for.

**Comment: Will Coronavirus have an impact on the population and thereby the school places in the area as it has been predicted that many people may be moving out of London and buying houses in this area, for the wonderful school, then commuting into London. If the Council say that there will be capacity then how does it work if Stanford loses say 30% and it cannot be the school it is due to financial viability, then having gone through redundancies and other financial restrictions, be expected to ramp numbers back up again shortly after due to lack of planning for the effect of Coronavirus and siblings.**

RB - There are various points in the year to continue to check the forecast. Each year applications are received which come in at end of January and these are aligned with predicted children followed by updated GP data that will revise figures for 2022 and for 2023 and introduce a new figure for 2024, the numbers that will impact on the forecast over the year can be kept under control. There is not a sophisticated methodology to identify the impact of Covid on the number of children that will be in the City; no authority has this. The accuracy of the forecast can be monitored and the strategic view is there will be sufficient spaces, even with the school at 60, to cater for the number of children in the proximity of the school with an underlying trend down, if there is a spike associated with Covid it will dampen that particular demand. How parents instigate their preferences will have to be considered. It will not be ideal for the school or local authority to be in this situation but with the decline in the number of children there should not be a need to increase the classes, however, if required, there is the capacity to ensure parents have a place in the school.

**Comment: This is a school that has been historically oversubscribed and people move here for the school. The concern is the financial consequence of the reduction, not just the loss of staff but the other ancillary things that can be achieved with the funding from 90 children as opposed to the funding for 60 children. With the cost of redundancies and Coronavirus impact and now this proposed cut how is this school going to be a good option.**

RB - Reducing number of children in school is going to have an impact on the budget and will continue to do so year after year and will take time and resource for the School Leadership and Governors. The school will have to look at the resources they have to allow them to ensure high quality education.

MD - Thanks were given to everyone who attended tonight and to Richard for delivering the Consultation Presentation and to the Council.

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Whilst it is understood that the LA has to look at numbers in the City and follow the process of this Consultation, no Head Teacher welcomes a reduction in PAN. Having been in the role for many years along with a dedicated staff team, I have witnessed first-hand the change of diversity and demographic and fully aware of the contention around the catchment area. We care passionately about the school and how it plays a pivotal role in the community. As one of the very few Infant Schools in this consultation and in the City in general, we pride ourselves on our bespoke offer and, by the nature of being an infant only school, we would encounter greater pressures if reduced to a 2-form entry. We would become a very small school therefore this would not only make us financially less stable it would also limit our capacity to offer the quality of provision that we are currently able to. Nevertheless, we would always strive to do our absolute best for quality provision but the capacity is within the staff team that we grow and develop. The strength and engagement with the community is demonstrated by the significant turn out to both meetings today.

RB - Slides were displayed showing Consultation Period 5<sup>th</sup> |October – 27 November along with further dates for presentation to other committees and details on how schools can object.

Views and comments are requested and there are a range of questions followed by Next Steps.

**Comment: To return to a point raised earlier regarding prediction of number of places and distance from school. Living less than 5 mins walk from school but not in BN1 5 post code is there information on children expected outside the planning area.**

RB - A Map is displayed showing 20 children who attend the school outside the planning area, which is 14%. The information can be accessed on the Council website.

**Comment: Will the admission criteria remain the same as it does currently i.e. the distance from home to school. If so, parents may have to drive to a school, which will not be in line with the Council ambition to have a carbon neutral city.**

RB - It is not envisaged to make any change to the criteria used. With fewer children living in the postcode location, it is possible that some children may have to travel further to attend school.

With this Consultation, the postcode logic is being questioned.

**Comment: Looking at modelling and the data, whether accounting for demographic churn. The churning of the number of children in the area around Stanford is low and quite static. Also using post codes as a boundary is a blunt tool and parents move to an area for preference for the school.**

RB - The data is not captured as you asked and is not something that can be done at present but might be looked into for future planning, broadly speaking using the figure of 90% of children in the city serves well and an adjustment to the number of places available can be made. We do not model for parent preferences as they can change over the years.

**Comment: There has been discussion on how schools change and their popularity can therefore change, however things have not changed at Stanford Infants it remains an outstanding school. Reducing the PAN at Stanford Infants will disproportionality impact the school, it is a little school**  
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**and there are other larger schools that can take the hit and weather the storm so Brighton and Hove should look at this disproportionate impact. It is felt that the other thing to be considered is about outstanding teaching and learning and Stanford Infants is a school that cares about every single child and every single child makes good progress, so that is why it is an outstanding school so why would Brighton and Hove seek to reduce the number of children who could receive that education.**

RB - It is accepted that reducing from 3 form entry to 2 form entry will have a significant impact on the funding particularly when looking at an Infant School with fewer classes against a Primary School. Across the city all schools care for their children, obviously judgements from Ofsted and quality of education has to be considered. However, this is an outstanding school with consistent staffing but there are other schools across the city that do not have the conditions to allow them to reach outstanding basis because they have uncertainty across pupil numbers with a large number of unfilled spaces. However, they are addressing their school improvement journey and the council needs to look at how they can ensure that all the schools can continue to survive, improve and get better. In doing that, with Stanford Infant we are potentially denying 30 children the high quality of education that comes from that school and children in future years have to go elsewhere. This is the balancing act that the council faces.

**Comment: It appears that the policy of the Council is to prop up failing schools by producing PAN on excellent schools.**

RB - Question if the City has failing schools but the remark is understood.

**Comment: There has been a lot said today about logistics and numbers behind everything. It is agreed that Stanford School is an outstanding school and one of the few outstanding schools in the Consultation. Beyond numbers and school organisation there is a moral imperative to drive the quality of education in the City; there is not an outstanding secondary school in the city. It is unfortunate that when there is Stanford Infants, with strong and stable leadership, outstanding for a number of years consistently with results well above national results and serving its SEN and disadvantaged pupils brilliantly, it seems a shame to hold a school like this back where there is a need for excellent quality education within the city. The Council seem to be worrying about numbers in less popular schools and not supporting a school that is doing really right and should be backed.**

RB - Thanks for the comments, which will be listened to and noted.

**Comment: From the meeting earlier today historical data was requested relating to distance from school and what this would mean for the places that will be lost between 60 and 90 How will the data become available and when.**

RB - The data and any other information asked for will be put on the Consultation website and the Council will make schools aware of any updated information.

**Comment: Looking at the points raised on postcodes versus distance from school, it does not make sense to have a school admissions policy based on distance from school and PAN based on postcodes. Westdene is an hour's walk when Stanford is 5 mins so how can they serve the same community,**

**the other nearby school is Brunswick which is also oversubscribed and also proposed to be cut.**

RB - The committee members will look at rationale put forward.

**Comment: To first echo previous comments that Stanford Infants offers an excellent standard of education. Looking at the Junior School, which is linked to the Infant School, clearly, the Infant School is part of this consultation but the Junior School is not. The experience of the two separate schools and the transition across is wonderful for the children and excellent to have in the area, so how will this proposed change impact on the Junior School, of course 3 years down the line.**

RB - If these proposals go through, in 3 years' time there will be a consultation on changing the Junior School PAN to match that of the Infant School. Future proposals cannot be put together at this point as limited to only talking about 2022 but naturally, as part of the planning process; it would be expected to mirror the change in the Infant School to the Junior School as that cohort works its way through. The consultation as it stands at the moment is open to anyone to respond to and Governors and Head Teachers of all schools have been made aware. Everyone is encouraged to make a response, including families, as what is being proposed for the Infant School has a bearing on the Junior School if the proposal goes through.

**Comment: Wishes to echo everything already said strength of feeling very much here. There is concern that by taking away a whole class this could in fact be a whole class of siblings in some years so very direct impact on community with young families in the area.**

RB - The concern about siblings and the impact if this proposal goes ahead has been noted.

At this point, as nearing 8pm, gave thanks to everyone for participating and encouraged everyone to go online to complete the response form.

**Comment: Regarding diversity. It appears that the immediate area around the school is not very diverse; therefore, reducing the PAN reduces diversity, has this been considered and to what extent.**

RB - By reducing the number of families then you are reducing the diversity. The information on diversity is not available to the Council. The admissions process does not take account of anyone's ethnicity or diversity so very little data on pupils and prospective pupils coming through the system is available. It is hard to indicate the impact regarding this but there is a strength in a school having a diverse community and as such, there is a risk of not having such a diverse community if these proposals got through.

RB - With no more questions, many thanks to everyone again and please complete the response form.