

**Minutes of Virtual Public Meeting of Primary School Admission
Arrangements September 2022 at Stanford Infants
Thursday 5th November 10:30 – 11:30am**

Introduction to rationale

Slides

Questions regarding first part of presentation (citywide)

Comment: In terms of housing growth, you have taken into account the timings of the new housing projects, however how much thought has been given to the geographical distribution? For example, many large developments in Hove currently which would be close to school.

RB - We align data of where the housing projects are with the data they are using for the proposals. However, a large number cannot be attributed to a large development and are instead individual homes. There is indication given to admissions of large developments

Comment: There are locations near to the schools that are seen as 'grey areas' where there is no specific catchment and schools are a slightly further distance. This can mean that parents are choosing what is their nearest school but are still being made to wait for places. If intake is then reduced, this takes away the capacity for a parent to choose a school rather than be given a school.

RB - The Council looks at where children are registered with local GP's and are comfortable that there will be places available to those children at local schools.

Comment: Out of the schools which are being considered for reduction, how many will be chosen?

RB- The proposals are put together by admissions on the assumption that all suggestions should be taken. After the consultation period, the report is then taken to the committee with recommendations which may have changed due to responses of the consultation. The committee will then make a decision of which proposal to take forward.

Comment: Assuming the projected numbers of pupils in the area are correct, does this mean that each proposal will need to be taken forward to achieve the outcome necessary?

RB - Yes, the proposals are based on the data received and are therefore calculated to this.

Comment: How confident are you that you are choosing the correct schools to be part of the proposals?

RB - We recognise that for infant schools, the impact will be bigger. We have looked at all schools in the areas where the data shows there are down-trends in child numbers. This data is provided from GP surgeries and is then based on postcode.

Comment: Some of the larger primary schools that are included in the proposals would not have the same impact as the smaller schools, especially Infants.

Comment: There are only two infant schools in the mix, one is Stanford Infants and the other is a 4 form entry Infants where undoubtedly the impact will be less.

RB - We are looking at a variety of schools, all within the same area. We cannot only look at larger schools and leave out smaller schools. The proposals are put forward for each school and then feedback is given before decisions made.

Comment: Have you looked at the impact of Private schools in the area?

RB - The council is only in the position to make decision for maintained schools. It does not hold power within Faith Funded, Free schools, Academies or Private schools. The information we receive from GP's is numbers registered and a certain percentage is then removed from these numbers to account for the possibility of children attending other non-maintained schools.

More Slides (explanation behind the assumption that our intake is mostly from BN1 5 postcodes)

Comment: How much has the impact of the current COVID-19 pandemic been considered? We have recently moved into the city from London, a decision made due to the current situation. At least one other family in the same group also made this move at the same time. There will be other families who will take this decision and will look to move into areas of Brighton that are near to the train station etc.

RB - If we reduce the numbers based on the current assumptions, it is not to say that we wouldn't then be able to increase the PAN if we were to see an increase in the applications in coming years. If we were to reduce to 60, we would be able to admit above that number whilst working with the school, if we were not able to offer a suitable alternative. We receive the data of applications in January and this does give time to make changes before offers in April.

Comment: Using the BN1 5 postcode doesn't seem to be an accurate marker of where the schools current catchment is. Many families come from outside this, so the planning around this seems to be flawed.

RB - The planning has been made based on schools position. We do understand that planning and proposals could be flawed and this is why we go to consultation.

Comment: How much have you looked at the modes of transport used to get to the school? Lots, if not the majority, of families walk to school which obviously reduces carbon footprint. We wouldn't want to force families to drive to schools that are further away.

RB - The data which we have access to is the questionnaires which can be flawed. It is useful to hear that we would need to be mindful on people's journeys.

Comment: What is the impact on the Junior School? Surely if the numbers are decreased at the Infants, the same will need to happen at the Junior School?

RB - Because of the way the process works, we cannot propose changes the Junior School until we need to make those changes. The process would then begin as the first cohort at the Infants move through the school.

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Comment: Surely, there could end up being a numbers issue once we start taking into account sibling links. For younger siblings then, this could mean they do not go through the same schools.

RB - The changes would be made the Junior School only as the first cohort leaves the Infant School, therefore same numbers at both schools.

Comment: This could still mean for younger siblings starting in the future, less stability of places.

RB - Sibling links will still be a priority for the admissions process.

Comment: Has the thinking process been joined up with the current increasing numbers at the local secondary schools? Varndean and Stringer have only just been expanded. Many parents will choose areas based on good secondary schools and may choose this area because of the places available at those secondary schools.

RB - Dorothy Stringer's expansion has been agreed as a temporary measure for two years. Varndean School is permanent. The pressure on Primary schools seems to primarily be in Hove, whereas the pressure on Secondary schools is in the Varndean/ Stringer area. The patterns of this will always vary, it helps to hear the views on these potential issues.

Comment: The data on the council website shows the last five years data where distance to schools is also calculated. If you're looking at starting to reduce numbers, the maximum number of children being 60. What is the distance of the 61st child based on current intake?

RB - Looking forward it will be that the amount of children in that area will be lower. Whereas the current data will show the distances of the currently intake.

Comment: This data would still be useful to know moving forward.

RB - It was agreed that this data would be made available.

More Slides

Comment: There has been a lot of talk of the reducing numbers but nothing on the impact on the quality of teaching. The schools has been outstanding in its inclusivity and diversity. It has the best reputation for its provision for children with additional needs; what will the impact be on the quality of provision from the school?

RB - There will undoubtedly be an impact, how that is managed would be down to the school. I'm sure the school will want to continue to deliver a high quality of education.

Madeleine Denyer:

Thank you to everyone for coming and for all showing such support to the school. I obviously feel very passionately about the school, each member of the school team works hard to reach the standards that we do. We train staff in many aspects and lots of staff choose to stay at the school for a long time, which offers experience. Obviously we would still strive for this, but it would be incredibly hard and would undoubtedly have an impact.

Comment: I feel it is necessary to make the point that continuing to go ahead with this process seems extremely premature especially now when we have no idea what the impact of COVID-19 will be. You're expecting schools to reduce their numbers now and then expect them to accept more in a year's time when the impact of COVID is more apparent. It's very premature to make staff redundant at this time, then have to recruit and re-train in the future.

RB - We feel at this point that we need to take action in response to the data that we have.

Comment: You say that the class sizes are 30 but that seems to be more of a target than necessity, could we not therefore say that class sizes could be reduced to 27 across the schools and keep the classes open.

RB - We cannot enforce a blanket reduction in class sizes. Appeals could be made to use the excess spaces and those schools then end up with 30 in each class regardless.

Comment: In terms of school budgets, which are already stretched, inevitably when you reduce the PAN of a school, this reduces the budget. If we reduce the PAN by a third, is it correct to say that the budget will be reduced by a third as well?

RB - The budgets are more complex but roughly speaking, yes.

Comment: If the target is to maintain the infrastructure at the school to ensure the ability to increase in the future, how is the school expected to meet these costs to maintain the school with a smaller budget?

RB - A school's budget is made up of around 80% staffing costs; these would decrease if there were less children in attendance.

Comment: I appreciate this; however if your goal is to maintain the standards of schools, then this doesn't seem to be a way to achieve this.

It's concerning that this may have an impact on the numbers of BAME children attending the school. If the numbers reduce, the catchment will inevitably become smaller. This will impact on the type of families which are able to get a place at the school. It could then become a less diverse environment.

RB - It is the responsibility of the council to ensure that there is a place for everyone at a quality school. It is important to us that schools are diverse and reflect their local community. The data that admissions received prior to giving a child a space does not include data regarding equalities. It is a fundamental flaw with the data at that stage which is given when the consultation begins. Later in the process, the data we receive will include details on the possible equality impact and this will influence our decisions.

We will certainly take the concern that the school may begin to not reflect its community if numbers are reduced.