



Rothersthorpe C.E Primary School

Church Street,
Rothersthorpe, Northampton. NN7 3HS
Tel No: 01604 830995
Email: bursar@rothersthorpe.northants-ecl.gov.uk



22nd February 2023

Dear Parent/Carer and Community

Formal Consultation to lower the age range at Rothersthorpe CE Primary School to include a 'pre-school' within our Reception class setting

Rothersthorpe CE Primary School is an 'Ofsted Good' rated school and 'Excellent graded' Church School, (SIAMS). The current capacity of the school is 105 pupils. However, over the last few years the school pupil numbers have decreased to 85 pupils currently on roll due to varying local factors such as limited affordable homes close by; lower birth rate. Rothersthorpe School joined Innovate Multi Academy Trust in September 2022 to ensure sustainability and continued high quality education for all pupils and staff.

The Governors of Rothersthorpe CE Primary School and Innovate Multi Academy Trust are moving forward together with a proposal to lower the age range of the school from 4-11 years to 3-11 years to include 'pre-schoolers'/foundation stage within the reception class setting.

We are working with The Department for Education and West Northamptonshire Council, and hope that this will take effect from September 2023. We have at the forefront of our minds the needs of every child at Rothersthorpe School and how we can continue to strive to best meet their educational needs and provide them with the enriched experiences needed to achieve their full potential.

We want to seek the views of everyone within the school and communities in a period of consultation.

The vision for Rothersthorpe CE Primary School

Our vision is:

- To be an inclusive school that supports pupils from the age of 3 years to 11 years to be the best they can be within a Christian environment
- To ensure a high-quality pre-school education with Rothersthorpe School
- To provide a safe, happy and supportive environment for all pupils to learn and develop as young people
- To have mutually beneficial links with all its communities, including The Village Hall, Church, Parish Council, Nursery and Trust Schools
- To be financially secure; enabling it to deliver this vision

- Rothersthorpe CE Primary School and Innovate Multi Academy Trust will be responsible for the quality of education, financial security and safeguarding of the children of the Pre-School

Why are we proposing to lower the age range of the School?

In 2019, 100% of our reception pupils achieved a 'good level of development' compared to the National average of 72%. Our Year 6 pupils achieved 75% in reading, writing and maths combined, compared to the National average of 59%.

The introduction of a pre-school/foundation stage from the age of 3 years, will further strengthen the quality of education provided at the school by achieving better outcomes for children who will have access to a teacher who has a Degree in Early Childhood Studies – birth to 8 years with Qualified Teacher Status and NVQ Level 3 staff. The school plans to open the 'pre-school'/foundation stage provision for the same hours as the school is currently open to better meet the needs of families who have children in both the school and pre-school as drop off and pick-up times would be inline with each other.

Whilst there is no guarantee that children attending the pre-school will gain a place at the school, those who apply and are successful in gaining a place in the reception class will have benefited from being pupils of the school from a much earlier age. The school would like the opportunity to have educated these children directly from the start of their early education entitlement meaning a smoother transition into the school should the decision be made by parents to apply.

In 2018, The Department for Education stated that 'the first few years of a child's life are critical to shaping their future development, and our ambition is to provide equality of opportunity for every child, regardless of background or where they live, because we know that good early years' education is the corner stone of social mobility'. This announcement was in-line with The Government's commitment to increase the number of early years' places delivered within primary schools following previous Ofsted recommendations.

Steven McIntosh, Save the Children Director of UK Poverty, said, 'High-quality child-care, led by graduate early years' teachers, can ensure children are ready for school. All of our little ones should have access to nursery care led by an early years' teacher'. (August 2018).

It is widely acknowledged that a primary school, which has a nursery/pre-school provision achieves better outcomes for pupils.

The Childcare Act 2016 placed a duty on local authorities to secure 30 hours of free childcare for working families with 3 and 4 year olds from September 2017. Rothersthorpe School is working towards offering greater flexibility for working families.

With this in mind, Rothersthorpe CE Primary School and Innovate Multi Academy Trust are keen to work with West Northamptonshire Council and The Department for Education by establishing pre-school/foundation stage provision within the current school reception class setting, giving children access to high quality provision with a qualified teacher who has a Degree in Early Childhood Studies - birth to 8 years and an NVQ 3 qualified staff member.

What are the reasons for the proposed change?

There are many reasons why we are proposing to lower the age range at Rothersthorpe CE Primary School. The main ones are summarised below:

- Rothersthorpe is graded as a 'Good School' with Ofsted and 'Excellent' by the Church inspection (SIAMS). We are confident of providing a high-quality early years' education for all pupils.
- Our teachers are already experienced with teaching mixed-aged classes – We have a Y1/2 class, Y3/4 class and a Y5/6 class. We are now planning a Foundation Stage/Reception class.
- The proposals are in response to recommendations made by Ofsted, The Department for Education and Save the Children to encourage more primary schools to establish their own nursery/pre-school provision to include 3 and 4 year olds, allowing more children to access high quality provision with a qualified teacher, improving their outcomes throughout life.
- To meet the requirements of working families and the introduction of 30 hours of free childcare.
- Children will become pupils of the school, allowing access to Early Years Provision within a Good and Excellent graded school. Whilst there is no guarantee of a place within the school from reception, those children who are successful in applying for a school place will be used to the school environment, teaching staff and ethos. Education will be provided by a fully qualified teacher who has a degree in early childhood studies and who will also be supported by an NVQ level 3 person; thereby improving individual pupils' early learning and development opportunities.
- Experienced staff appointed to work within the Foundation Stage/Reception class will have access to training alongside colleagues across the whole of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and vice versa. There may be opportunities to work within all year groups, sharing expertise; benefiting children throughout the school. There will also be opportunities to work with other pre-schools/nurseries that are based with primary schools within our Academy Trust. Thus, providing further high-quality professional development for staff.
- Children and families in the pre-school will have access to support services within the school and Academy Trust which may include 'Special Needs' support, Family Support Workers, speech and language provision, well-being etc. Children will have access to extra curriculum resources such as the library, music, PE and sport, as well as being included in all events such as Harvest, Christmas, Easter, May Day, sports day, special curriculum events etc.

How will the proposed change benefit pupils of Rothersthorpe CE Primary School?

If the proposal is approved, the change could bring many benefits for pupils. The main ones are summarised below:

- Rothersthorpe CE Primary School will be able to build upon the high-quality education provided for their current pupils between the ages of 4-11 years. Children will have access to a carefully planned curriculum which will meet the needs of the children and community.
- Our current school curriculum already has Foundation Stage (pre-school) as part of the early years planning. Our experienced Reception teacher has a Degree in Early Childhood Studies from birth to 8 years with qualified teacher status. Our school also has two staff members who are NVQ level 3 trained. There will be a continuation of the school's strong whole school curriculum intent throughout the school with high-quality texts supporting children's oracy and English development.
- The curriculum at Rothersthorpe School places a high emphasis on using the environment to stimulate and enhance learning. The classroom and outdoor provision, including a large field, playground, Forest School area and beautiful village location has been planned to focus on

physical development and communication and language development and will therefore support all children as they progress through each key stage.

- There will be opportunities for continuity for pupils who choose to enroll for primary provision at Rothersthorpe School; to remain in an environment with which they are familiar – from early years through to year 6 should they wish. Existing networks will be in place and they will be taught by teachers and school leaders who know them well and have developed relationships with them and their families from a young age.
- Research strongly supports the idea that mixed-aged classrooms, (e.g. Foundation Stage/Reception; Year 1/2; Y3/4; Y5/6) are better for pupils. Not only do pupils out-perform peers of the same age academically, studies also show that they thrive socially. Here's why –
 - **Children are viewed as unique individual:** when a class contains pupils of varied ages, teachers concentrate on what the children CAN do, rather than what they CAN'T do. Teachers focus on instructing each child according to their own strengths. This differs from a single year group class in which teachers often expect all children to be at the same place at the same time with regard to ability.
 - **The pace of learning is individualised:** In mixed-age classes, teachers tailor the curriculum and instruction for each pupil.
 - **Promoting co-operation:** In mixed-age classes, children are more likely to co-operate than compare. The spirit of co-operation and caring makes it possible for children to see each other as individuals, as opposed to competitors.
 - **Children develop a sense of family with their class mates:** Mixed-aged classes generate a family of learners who support and care for one another. Older children have the opportunity to be mentors/buddies and take leadership roles. They model more sophisticated approaches to problem solving, helping younger children to accomplish tasks they would not be able to do independently. This dynamic increases the older child's level of independence and competence, while increasing the younger child's spirit of belonging in a community of learners.
 - **Self-esteem blossoms:** Multi-age classes are socially and psychologically healthy because they promote friendship and provide extended contact with adults and peers of varying ages.
- Pupils who attend Rothersthorpe CE Primary and Pre-School/Foundation Stage will not be disadvantaged when deciding on their transition to primary education. They will have the same choice as those in other early years provision.

What are the potential issues arising from the proposed change?

There will be challenges to address before a pre-school provision can be opened, these include:

- The space will also be occupied by the reception class, although numbers are low for September 2023. The Reception class PAN is 15 pupils. Legal capacity in the space provided is a maximum number of 22 children at any given time. A re-structure of the furniture and resources will be required. The school has capital funding to ensure the provision is of high-quality.
- Re-deployment and possible further recruitment of staff will need to commence to ensure highly qualified teaching staff are in place for September 2023 across the school and to ensure correct ratios for supervision, particularly in the Foundation Stage/Reception class. All policies and procedures will be followed, including any relevant training and safer recruitment.

We are confident that we can meet these challenges with our experienced Early Years qualified teacher and NVQ level 3 staff.

Submission of feedback to the consultation

It is important that all stakeholders and other interested parties are given the opportunity to express their views in order for Rothersthorpe CE Primary School to consider these before making a final decision.

**The 4 week consultation period will begin from:
Monday 27th February 2023 to 5pm on Friday 24th March 2023**

The purpose of this document is to provide you with information and to give you the opportunity to express your views.

Feedback can be given via email, no later than **5pm on Friday 24th March 2023** to the following school leaders:

Mrs Nicola Fountain – headteacher: n.fountain@rothersthorpe.innovatemat.org

or

Mrs Fiona Newitt – School Chair of Governors: f.newitt@rothersthorpe.innovatemat.org

or

Mr Antony Witheyman – CEO of Innovate Multi Academy Trust: antony.witheyman@innovatemat.org

A drop-session to discuss any views in person has been organised for:

Tuesday 14th March 2023 from 1.30pm to 6pm at Rothersthorpe School

Please call or email to book an appointment so that we can plan accordingly. Please book an appointment **before 5pm on Monday 13th March 2023** to ensure we are available. Please 01604 830995 or email Mrs Fountain on: n.fountain@rothersthorpe.innovatemat.org

All responses to the consultation will be fully considered by Rothersthorpe CE Primary School and Innovate Multi Academy Trust.

What are the next steps?

- Monday 27th February 2023 consultation starts
- Tuesday 14th March 2023 - 1.30-6pm drop-in sessions for any views (Book an appointment by 5pm on the 13th March).
- Friday 24th March 2023 at 5pm consultation ends
- April 2023 - Consultation analysis report circulated

If the decision is made to go ahead with the proposal:

On the 1st September 2023 the school's age range will be lowered and pre-school children will be able to access early years provision within the Reception class at Rothersthorpe CE Primary School. (As long as The DfE has completed all the paperwork in time).

Consultation List:

- Pupils and Parents on roll at Rothersthorpe CE Primary School
- Staff at Rothersthorpe CE Primary School
- Parents and staff of children attending Rothersthorpe Nursery
- Headteachers and Chairs of all schools in Northamptonshire
- Northamptonshire MPs
- Local Councillors
- Rothersthorpe Village Hall Committee
- Rothersthorpe Parish Council
- St Peter and St Paul's Church in Rothersthorpe
- Local community /businesses who might be affected by the proposal
- Any other interested party

The consultation document will also be published on the School Website for the four-week consultation period

www.rothersthorpeprimary.net

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Fountain – Headteacher of Rothersthorpe CE Primary School

Mrs Fiona Newitt – Rothersthorpe School Chair of Governors

Mr Antony Witheyman – CEO of Innovate Multi Academy Trust