

# Statutory proposal for making prescribed alterations at Downs Barn School

Notice is given in accordance with section 19(1) of the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#) and the [‘Making significant changes \(‘prescribed alterations’\) to maintained schools – Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers’, October 2024](#), that **Milton Keynes City Council** in conjunction with the Governing Board of the school proposes to change the [age range of Downs Barn School from 3 to 7 years to 2 to 7 years](#).

## School and local authority details

**Proposer:** Access to Education, Employment and Training, Milton Keynes City Council, Civic, 1 Saxon Gate East, Milton Keynes, MK9 3EJ

**School:** Downs Barn School, 69 Downs Barn Boulevard, Downs Barn, Milton Keynes, MK14 7NA

## Description of alteration

Downs Barn School is a community infant school with an age range of 3 to 7 years. It is proposed that the age range is lowered to 2 to 7 years to enable the school to admit children from the age of two years old.

## Evidence of demand

Local authorities are expected to strategically support the early years and childcare sector and hold a statutory duty to secure early years provision free of charge to those that are entitled under the Childcare Act 2006 and 2016, so far as reasonably practicable. The introduction of new entitlements for eligible working parents, introduced in the 2023 Spring budget, means that from April 2024, children aged two years of eligible working parents are entitled to 15 hours free childcare. This increases to 30 hours entitlement from September 2025.

Downs Barn School is located within the Conniburrow and Pebbles Family Centre reach area which currently projects a shortfall of provision at the two year old age group. The family centre reach covers a large area and it must also be noted that there is currently limited provision in Downs Barn itself to meet this additional projected demand without any change. Downs Barn School offer 26 sessional places for three year olds and has capacity to offer a further ten sessional places to two year olds. Parents and carers have approached the school to request places for two year olds in their local area which the school have had to turn down due to their current age range.

This change will support to meet the additional projected demand in the area. Downs Barn School is federated with Germander Park School and Southwood School. Germander Park School already offer places to two year olds. Families continue to also request places for two year olds at Germander Park School, however, this provision is now full with no further capacity to expand the number of places available. If the age range of Downs Barn School is lowered, then it is possible for some of these children to be accommodated at the school given their close proximity.

## **Objectives**

The objective of this proposal is to ensure that the council can continue to fulfil its statutory duty to provide sufficient early years places in this area. The council, the headteacher and the Governing body of Downs Barn School have worked in partnership on this proposal and believe that it brings potential benefits to the school and the local community including:

- an increase in the number of places available for two year olds at a school that is judged Good by Ofsted (March 2024) with Good Early Years provision outcomes.
- an increase in provision available to parents across the family centre area and within Downs Barn itself.
- children will be able to attend morning and afternoon sessions enabling families to access a more flexible offer.
- greater opportunities for staff, making it more likely the existing high quality staff will be retained and high quality staff would be attracted to work at the school.
- It is possible that by lowering the age range it will attract more children to the school at an earlier point and subsequently support to increase the number of children applying to the school in reception supporting with the school's longer term stability and growth.

## **The effect on other educational institutions with the area**

Milton Keynes City Council believes that the change to the school's age range will have little or no effect on other local schools and early years provision within the area. As a result of increasing demand due to recent changes in childcare entitlements, it is unlikely that other pre-school providers would experience a reduction in numbers.

## **Project costs and indication of how these will be met, including how long term value for money will be achieved**

No capital works are required to implement this change as the school already has a nursery in place for 3 to 4 year olds, therefore there are no associated capital costs.

## **Implementation plan**

This statutory consultation will end on 23 February 2025. The Cabinet Member for Children and Families will consider the outcome of the statutory consultation in March 2025 and will make a decision on whether to proceed with the change of age range. If the proposal is agreed, the school's age range will change with effect from 22 April 2025 and the school will be able to offer nursery provision for two years olds.

## **How to respond to this statutory consultation**

The closing date for comments is 23 February 2025. Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal (27 January 2025) any person may support, object or make comments by completing the online response form or by sending comments to [sufficiencyandaccess@milton-keynes.gov.uk](mailto:sufficiencyandaccess@milton-keynes.gov.uk) or in writing to:

Access to Education, Employment and Training  
Milton Keynes City Council  
Civic, 1 Saxon Gate East  
Milton Keynes  
MK9 3EJ

A copy of this consultation can be found online at [www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.milton-keynes.gov.uk/consultations)