



Grasvenor Avenue Infant School

Kindness Unity Honesty Resilience Respect Courage

Dear Stakeholder

As you are aware the Trustees of the school have been looking at the long term viability of the school given its size, the closure of the Grasvenor Project due to the pandemic and the lack of opportunity to join other academy trusts to grow the school. I am sending this letter to update you on where we are in the closure process and inviting you to share your views and/or comments on the closure process, outlined in this letter.

Grasvenor Avenue Infant School is an academy where the trustees carry out the role as the maintaining body for the school. As such, any decisions on the future of the school will be taken by the trustees, in consultation with key strategic partners. These partners include the Local Authority, who retain the statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places in the right location, and that provision is of sufficient size, is viable, and of good quality. In May 2021, trustees made an application to the Department for Education to consider the closure of Grasvenor Avenue Infant School in August 2022.

Since then the Trustees have been working with the Local Authority to explore other options and to examine the impact that closure will have on the children and staff of the school. Detailed information has been provided to the Department for Education and a substantive decision has been made to terminate the funding agreement for the school.

As part of the process set out in the Closure of an Academy by Mutual Agreement Guidance January 2022, we are moving to the next stage of the process: the “**listening period**”.

This will run for four weeks from **25 February 2021** to **25 March 2021** and allows you as a stakeholder to submit comments and any concerns on the closure process. This letter also provides details on why the school is closing, what alternative options have been considered and how the closure process will operate in relation to pupils and staff. At the close of the listening period, the Trustees and Department for Education will consider views and concerns raised as part of the closure process.

You can share your views by:

- Completing the online questionnaire – which can be accessed [here](#)
- Requesting a printed copy and completing a hard copy of the questionnaire, posting it to:

Grasvenor Avenue Infant School, Grasvenor Avenue, Barnet, Hertfordshire, EN5 2BY

- Attending an event at Grasvenor Avenue Infant School, Grasvenor Avenue, Barnet EN5 2BY on **25 February 2021 from 10am to 11am.**

We look forward to hearing your views.

Yours sincerely

Ian Phillips
Chair of Trustees

1. Background Information

Current pupil number context

The school currently has 59 pupils on roll with a capacity for 90 pupils.

Year Group	PAN*	Capacity	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Total	Surplus Places	% of Surplus Places
Pupil Numbers	30	90	27	15	17	59	31	34%

*Planned Admission Number

In previous years, the numbers across the school have been as low as 15-18 per class which has meant up to a 50% capacity across what is already a small school.

Birth rates have been falling across Barnet in recent years, along with the rest of England. The change is reflected in the High Barnet / Underhill area population of 4-year-olds, predicted to decrease by approximately 13% over the next five years.

Declining pupil numbers are difficult to manage and can lead to irregular class sizes and inefficient staff-to-pupil ratios. Smaller schools tend to have a higher proportion of fixed costs than larger schools and, as such, have less flexibility to respond to cost pressures, unexpected events, and deficit recovery.

There are sufficient surplus places in the immediate area to accommodate most of the 59 pupils currently on roll at Grasvenor Avenue, if the school closes. Any pupils who live beyond a safe walking distance from the nearest school with vacancies will be allocated a place at one of several oversubscribed local schools through Barnet's Fair Access Protocol.

School roll projections are reviewed annually, and the last forecast indicated a gradual fall in demand for Reception places in the Underhill and High Barnet wards from 357 in the current academic year to 303 after five years. There are currently 335 permanent school places across seven other schools in the area and a surplus in adjacent wards, so no significant shortfall is expected for future Reception cohorts following the proposed closure of Grasvenor Avenue Infant School.

Nonetheless it may be necessary to create a temporary bulge class to meet a shortfall for the 2022 Reception intake. Underhill Primary School is the one local school that has space to take an extra class if required and the council is in discussion with the school with a view to making adaptations to accommodation to facilitate this.

Grasvenor Avenue Infant School has been undersubscribed for a number of years and in looking at alternative options for the school, trustees have taken into account the following factors:

- The quality of provision and outcomes achieved for pupils
- School leadership
- Federations and collaborations
- Financial viability
- The location of schools in relation to local pupil numbers
- Parental choice for schools
- Premises.

Being undersubscribed in relation to pupil numbers when compared to capacity means it is difficult for the school to be financially viable and to regularly have good outcomes for pupils.

Financial viability

Table below provides an overview of Grasvenor Avenue Infant School's three-year budget plan, with one year of actuals for historical comparison in 2020.

Budget Plan	2020/21	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024
Budget Share	451,920	466,603	439,973	439,973
Carry Forward	168,421	56,182	9,232	-85,438
Available Budget	620,341	523,424	449,205	354,535
Other Income	123,918	86,693	70,233	70,233
TOTAL REVENUE	744,259	609,478	519,438	424,768
Staffing	519,967	458,682	463,312	473,538
% of budget share (exc. carry forward)	90%	82%	90%	100.07%
Premises	30,636	32,923	32,923	32,923
% of budget share (exc. carry forward)	5%	5%	6%	7%
Supplies & Services	137,474	108,641	108,641	108,641
% of budget share (exc. carry forward)	23%	19%	21%	24%
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	688,077	600,246	604,876	615,102
C/FWD	56,182	9,232	-85,438	-190,334
% of budget share	12%	1%	-19%	-43%

Quality of education

At its last Ofsted inspections in 2016, Grasvenor Avenue Infant School was rated overall as Good, having previously being rated as Requiring Improvement in 2014. Over six years since its last inspection, this rating has kept Grasvenor Avenue Infant School going, and any reduction in rating will have a severe impact on the school.

2. Alternative options to closure considered

A number of options were considered before agreeing to contact the Department for Education on the possible closure of Grasvenor Avenue Infant School back in May 2021. These included:

- Grasvenor Project continuing to support school's viability** – the Grasvenor Project, supporting secondary-aged children who had been permanently excluded from school, had been a successful programme, both financially and in engaging young people, since inception around 2012 when the school became an academy. During the pandemic, all this work ceased and the healthy reserves of £180K+ were all used up trying to ride out the pandemic. The project was closed and this source of income is no longer available to supplement the provision of the school.
- Expanding to become a 1FE primary school.** This option was considered by trustees, though they did not have the capital investment to expand the buildings. There was not the need for additional Junior school places in the area to justify this investment into the building on the current pupil number projections. For this reason, this option was discounted.
- Joining a larger multi-academy trust.** This option was extensively explored with other Trusts. In undertaking their due diligence, academy trusts, both local and national, find some small schools to be financially unviable or too isolated to be included in their trust, unless they convert with other small schools to form a local hub. This was not an option with local schools. A Trust did look like a viable option for Grasvenor in 2020, though they withdrew in April 2021.

- **No change.** As outlined in the consultation document, Grasvenor Avenue Infant School has been undersubscribed for a number of years, and pupil numbers fall significantly short of its published admission number each year. There is very little in-area demand for places at the school. The school faces significant financial challenges, with the trustees' three-year budget plan showing a deficit of over £190,000 by 2023/24. Doing nothing will not address these challenges.

Having considered all of these options, the Trustees decided to contact the Department for Education to seek mutual agreement on closing the school based on the future financial viability of the school and the number of school places available in the local area.

3. Proposed School Closure Process

3.1 Displaced Pupils

If the decision is taken to close the school following the listening period, the Local Authority will be actively involved in a preferences process for pupils' places, so all parents will get a say in the future destination of their child, as it is their statutory responsibility to ensure the provision of school places.

Displaced Grasvenor pupils applying for a transfer to a Barnet community school will be considered under the 'exceptional circumstances' oversubscription criterion for a priority place at their preferred local school.

Barnet Admissions Team will host a drop-in surgery at the school on 25 February, for parents seeking advice and assistance with the admissions transfer process. Further sessions will be arranged, as required.

3.2 School Staff

School staff will continue to be fully consulted on the proposals to close the school and their trade union representatives. All efforts will be made to find alternative employment for staff by working with the Local Authority. Where this isn't possible, a redundancy process will be followed.

3.3 School Site

If the school closes, the site will be returned to the Local Authority and re-purposed to provide additional specialist places for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Barnet has seen a significant rise in the number of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) that require a place at a Special School.

This demand has prompted the need to expand Northway Special School through the creation of an annex on the Grasvenor school site. The new Northway Annex will create additional Special School places enabling Northway special school to be an all through school for children aged from 5 to 18 with complex special educational needs, including learning needs, Autism and associated social, emotional and mental health needs. 39 places would be available on the Grasvenor site from September 2022, rising to 72 places in subsequent years. The proposal to extend Northway Special School through the development of an annex on the Grasvenor school site will be subject to separate consultation in the coming weeks.

4. Equality Impact Assessment

The school is required to have 'due regard' to the duties set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Public Sector Equality Duty, 'PSED') in determining these proposals. An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the closure process to identify the equality implications of this proposal and any appropriate mitigation.

Thank you