

PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF WEST RISE COMMUNITY INFANT SCHOOL AND WEST RISE JUNIOR SCHOOL AND CHANGE OF AGE RANGE

SECTION 15 OF THE EDUCATION AND INSPECTIONS ACT 2006 (AS AMENDED BY THE EDUCATION ACT 2011) and the SCHOOL ORGANISATION (ESTABLISHMENT AND DISCONTINUANCE OF SCHOOLS) REGULATIONS 2013; AND

SECTION 19(1) OF THE EDUCATION AND INSPECTIONS ACT 2006 (AS AMENDED BY THE EDUCATION ACT 2011) AND THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION (PRESCRIBED ALTERATIONS TO MAINTAINED SCHOOLS) (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2013

1. Contact details

Name and address of the local authority making the proposal:

East Sussex County Council

Address: County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes BN7 1UE

Name of schools: West Rise Community Infant School and West Rise Junior School

Address of schools: Chaffinch Road, Eastbourne BN23 7SL

Category of schools: Community

2. Implementation

The proposals are to discontinue West Rise Junior School with effect from 30 April 2025 and change the age range at West Rise Community Infant School from 4-7 to 2-11 to create an all-through primary school with nursery provision with effect from 1 May 2025.

3. Reason for the proposals

West Rise Community Infant School and West Rise Junior School are two separate schools which share the same site. Each school has its own governing board and, until recently, had separate headteachers and worked independently. In July 2023, an Ofsted inspection of the junior school judged the quality of education and leadership and management as requires improvement.

Since January 2024, the schools have been working in partnership with one of the infant co-heads acting as headteacher across the two schools. This has resulted in similar approaches being used across the two schools which will benefit children's transition between the schools. This includes, for example, the same approach to the teaching of phonics and early reading across the schools. East Sussex County Council (the Local Authority) is keen to further support this partnership working through the formal amalgamation of the two schools. Governors of both schools want to sustain the improvements that are being made and ensure a strong future for the school community.

West Rise Nursery is currently run by the governors of West Rise Community Infant School under a different Ofsted registration, meaning it is run as a separate legal entity to the school. By changing its age range, the all-through primary school would be able to formally take on the management of the nursery under the same Ofsted registration as the school.

4. Objectives

One of the Local Authority's guiding principles to school organisation is to support the amalgamation of linked infant and junior schools to deliver the benefit of continuous provision from early years to the end of Key Stage 2. Amalgamation would bring about the following educational benefits:

- There would no longer be a need for families of children in Year 2 to have to apply for a place in the junior school from Year 3, thereby removing any uncertainty about transfer to a 'new' school at the end of Key Stage 1.
- A shared vision and ethos across the school.
- Continuity of experience for children - in teaching and learning, pupil care and development - under a single headteacher and staff.
- Greater ability to track progress between key stages.
- A more coherent delivery of the National Curriculum from Foundation Stage through to the end of Key Stage 2.
- Easier sharing of good practice across the whole school.
- Expertise within the whole school could be better targeted across the full age range.
- Professional development opportunities for staff within an all-through primary school environment.
- Greater flexibility in organising classes, deploying teaching and support staff, and using curriculum resources more effectively.
- Greater opportunities for staff recruitment.
- Consistent engagement with families across the school.

Staff would continue in their roles as the two schools become one all-through primary school. The proposed changes may present opportunities for staff who would have more opportunities for professional development and would be able to gain greater understanding and experience of working in a primary school environment. The employer would remain East Sussex County Council, so there would be no need for a transfer of employment to take place under the Transfer of Undertaking and Protection of Employment Regulations 2006 (as amended in 2014) (TUPE).

No existing member of staff would be required to change their contract of employment by working across both schools. The proposed change would not constitute a break in service or affect staff terms and conditions in any way. The Local Authority knows the process of bringing two schools together as one can be unsettling for staff. As with any process of change, the interests of staff must be considered carefully, and all staff, and their unions would be consulted in accordance with the Council's Managing Change policies. The Local Authority's Human Resources team would work closely with school staff throughout the transition.

The all-through primary school would continue to operate on the existing school site under a single governing board and headteacher.

5. Pupil numbers and admissions

All children attending the infant and junior schools on the date of amalgamation would automatically have a place at the all-through primary school. At the May 2024 School Census, West Rise Community Infant School had 267 children on roll and West Rise Junior School had 356 children on roll.

The primary school's pupil capacity would be 630 which is equivalent to the places currently available at the separate infant and junior schools.

As a primary school, families of children in Year 2 would no longer have to apply for a place in the junior school from Year 3.

6. Displaced pupils

No children would be displaced by the proposals.

7. Impact on the community

It is anticipated that the proposal would have a positive impact on the school community, as set out in the benefits in section 4 above.

8. Rural primary schools

Neither school is designated as a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2023.

9. Balance of denominational provision

West Rise Community Infant School and West Rise Junior School are both community schools. The balance of denominational provision in the area would not change as the proposed all-through primary school would be a community school.

10. Maintained nursery schools

Currently, West Rise Nursery is run by the governors of West Rise Community Infant School under a different Ofsted registration, meaning it is run as a separate legal entity to the school. By changing its age range, the new all-through primary school would be able to formally take on the management of the nursery under the same Ofsted registration as the school.

11. Sixth form provision

Neither school has sixth form provision.

12. Special educational needs provision

At the May 2024 School Census, 142 children across the two schools (22.8% of the combined cohort) were identified as requiring special educational needs (SEN) support. This was higher than the average of 16.1% for East Sussex primary schools. 12 children across the two schools (1.9% of the combined cohort) had an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). This was in line with the average of 2% for East Sussex primary schools.

Unless a child has an EHCP, the determination of whether a child has SEN is down to individual schools in consultation with parents and the threshold varies between schools. All schools have the same duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014 to identify and provide for children with SEN. Unless there are specific provisions named in a statutory plan which would make admission incompatible with the requirement for reasonable adjustments, it is a legal requirement for all schools to comply. As the barriers to learning, that a child with SEN might experience, change over time, the Local Authority would expect provision to adapt and change alongside these developments. In some cases, children may cease to be identified as having SEN if appropriate adjustments are put in place to enable them to overcome barriers and to make progress in line with their peers.

13. Travel

As all children currently on roll at the infant and junior schools would automatically have a place at the all-through primary school following amalgamation, the Local Authority does not envisage any change to current travel arrangements.

14. The effect on other educational institutions within the area

The Local Authority does not believe that the proposals would have an effect on other educational institutions within the area as there would be no loss of provision or places as a result of the proposals.

15. Project costs

No capital expenditure is required to implement the proposals.