

Children's Services

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To parents/carers of children at
Ninfield CE Primary School

Date 7 February 2018

when responding please contact

our ref

your ref

Dear Parent/Carer

As you may be aware, East Sussex County Council has been working with Ninfield CE Primary School to progress a significant build project to re-provide two temporary classrooms with permanent accommodation, undertake internal remodelling works to the hall and classroom spaces and create additional external hard play spaces for school and wider community use. In May 2016 the project was agreed and a budget allocated in the Council's approved capital programme at that time.

The Council has been involved in protracted negotiations with Ninfield Parish Council to secure a long term lease for a small additional piece of land required to provide the requisite space for the new building and external play areas. The lengthy nature of these negotiations has led to a significant escalation in the cost of the project over and above the budget agreed for the project. The Council only receives capital funding to meet our statutory needs of providing additional school places where they are required to meet rising pupil numbers. The replacement of mobile classrooms with permanent accommodation does not form part of the Council's statutory duty. The increase in cost to this project means that the project is no longer affordable to the Council. Consequently, the Council has had to take the difficult decision to halt the project, other than the internal remodelling works, as the additional costs cannot be met from the current capital programme, which was approved after the original project budget was agreed, and is limited to delivering only the Councils' core need of additional school places.

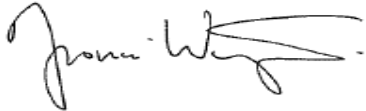
As a result of this decision, the temporary classrooms will need to be removed from site at the earliest opportunity as the Council cannot secure further planning permission for them. The school will therefore be left with only four classrooms in the main building. The implication of this is that the school will, over time, be required to reduce in size so that all children can be accommodated in the four classrooms. To achieve this, the school's published admission number (PAN) will have to be reduced from 20 to 15 from the 2019/20 academic year, subject to the necessary consultation. It is likely that the school will be in a position to organise on the basis of four classrooms from the 2022/23 academic year. Although a reduction in the PAN will result in fewer places being available at the school, our pupil forecasts show that there should continue to be sufficient capacity at the school to serve children living in the Ninfield community area.

I know this news will be disappointing to you, but I hope you will understand why the Council cannot commit limited funding to a project which no longer offers value for money and which does not form part of the Council's core capital programme to deliver additional school places. The Council will work with the headteacher and governing body to effectively manage the reduction in size of the school over the coming years.

A consultation on the proposed reduction in the school's PAN from 20 to 15 with effect from the 2019/20 academic year begins today and runs until 21 March 2018. If you have any comments on the proposal please respond to the consultation by the closing date using the following link.

<https://consultation.eastsussex.gov.uk/>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Wright', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Fiona Wright
Assistant Director – Education & ISEND