

To: All Interested Parties including: Heywood Residents, Governing Body of Derby Street Nursery School, Headteachers and Governing Bodies of Heywood Township Schools and Headteachers and Governing Bodies of other Rochdale Borough schools, Secretaries of Recognised Trades Unions, neighbouring Local Authorities, Manchester and Salford Diocesan Authorities, The Methodist Church, MP for Heywood and Middleton, MP for Rochdale, Heywood Township Councillors, Private and Voluntary Early Years Providers.

Dear Sir/Madam,

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF DERBY STREET NURSERY SCHOOL FROM 31st March 2015

The reason for this letter is to tell you that the Local Authority has published statutory proposals to close Derby Street Nursery School with effect from 31st March 2015 because not enough children want to take up places at the school. This means that the school will no longer be financially viable.

Background

1. Derby Street Nursery School has places for 39 full-time equivalent nursery age children. The school also offered day care provision. The school currently has **no** children on roll and the day care provision ceased in May 2014. The school is located in North Heywood ward, but is immediately adjacent to West Heywood Ward. Both Wards are areas of high deprivation.

What is proposed?

2. The proposal is that Derby Street Nursery School is closed with effect from 31st March 2015.

Why is the local authority considering closing the school?

3. The reason for considering closure is because there have not been enough children taking up places in the school, and currently (September 2014) there are no children at the school. Nursery schools are funded based on the number of children taking up places and not the number of places available. This means that if the school stays open it would be in a deficit budget position, without the likelihood of being able to put forward an achievable repayment plan.

How many children are there in Heywood that might want nursery places this year?

4. There were 383 children born in Heywood in school year 2010-11, who would be expected to want a part-time place in a nursery setting as rising 4's. There are a further 382 children born in 2011-12 who might want a part-time nursery place as rising 3's. That is a maximum total of 765 children who might want a part-time place (382.5 full time equivalent children). There are a total of 771 full time equivalent places that is up to 1542 half-time places available across nursery classes in schools, Derby Street Nursery School and a wide range of private and voluntary providers. In brief there are almost twice as many places as there are Heywood children.

What was the recent trend in take up of places at the school?

5. In May 2013 there were 70 children in the nursery, which is 35 full time equivalent children (FTE), and represents 90% occupancy. In October 2013, at the start of school year 2013-14, there were only 35 children that is 17.5FTE representing 45% occupancy. That level of take-up continued throughout the year, but there were no rising 3's, which would form the core of the nursery intake for September 2014. There were only 7 children whose parents

expressed an interest in a place at the nursery school for September, and such very low numbers are not viable.

Are there enough alternative places of comparable quality within a reasonable distance?

6. Should the Nursery School close, whilst there are no children currently on roll at the school, there are enough places available elsewhere in the Township that are good or better, to meet overall demand because the vast majority of settings are graded good or outstanding. Derby Street Nursery School has a current Ofsted grade of good.

Why is the school not financially viable?

7. Funding for all nursery provision, whether maintained, private or voluntary, is under the Early Years Single Funding Formula. Since 2007 all Early Years provision, which includes Nursery Schools, have been funded by a single funding formula (SFF). This is a participation based formula which funds actual hours of attendance and not places available (e.g. the Local Authority does not fund 26 places if only 18 children attend; providers are funded on the total number of hours that the 18 children use). Over the past two to three years the hours accessed at Derby Street Nursery School has steadily declined.

Further information

8. The full consultation paper is available on the Council website through the following link: <http://consultations.rochdale.gov.uk/research/derbystreet> . You can also submit your comments through this link.

How can I make my views known?

9. There is a statutory representation period of 4 weeks which will start on 8th January 2015, and end at midnight on 4th February 2015. Responses to the consultation can be on-line as above or by e-mail to robert.aspinall@rochdale.gov.uk or by post to Robert Aspinall, School Organisation & Development Team, Early Help and Schools, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council, Number One Riverside, Smith Street ROCHDALE OL16 1XU.

Who takes the decision?

10. After the close of the representation period, the Cabinet of Rochdale Borough Council will consider responses to the proposal to close the Nursery School and decide whether to approve the closure or not. That decision will take account of any representations made and statutory guidance for decision makers.

Yours Faithfully,

Sue Eastwood
Head of Schools
Early Help and Schools