



Mundella Primary School



Change of age-range consultation

Summary of consultation findings and recommendation(s)

Introduction – Consultation purpose and approach

The purpose of the consultation was to seek stakeholder views on Mundella Primary School's proposal to lower the age range from 4-11 to 3-11 in order to be able to open a pre-school nursery class at Mundella with effect from 1 September 2024.

The consultation process took place over a period of five weeks from Monday 29 January 2024 to Monday 4 March 2024.

The consultation process complied fully with the 2018 Cabinet Office principles for a fair and open consultation. Veritas Multi Academy Trust sought to consult with a wide range of stakeholders, to ensure that as many people as possible were aware of the proposal and had the opportunity for their views to be captured. Below provides an overview of key stakeholders targeted as part of the consultation process:

- Local nurseries near to Mundella Primary School (Folkestone East area)
- All Folkestone primary, secondary and special schools
- Schools within the Trust & staff – including Trustees and Governors
- The local Member of Parliament
- Representatives from Kent County Council, including Folkestone & Hythe Councillors
- Parents and/or carers of pupils at Mundella Primary School
- Local businesses near to Mundella Primary School
- Local media
- Any other interested member of the community, including prospective parents and/or carers

In order to ensure that the consultation had a wide reach, a number of communication and consultation methods were used to promote engagement in the process. These included:

- The establishment of a dedicated consultation area on the school's website - <https://www.mundella.kent.sch.uk/pre-school>
- Targeted letters to the above identified stakeholders
- An advert in the Folkestone Herald newspaper – average readership 5,722 (JICREG 2022)
- A consultation & information event which took place on 22 February 2024 from 3pm to 7pm
- Posters displayed in local business windows
- Establishment of a display outlining the proposal in the entrance area at Mundella Primary School
- Establishment of a dedicated consultation email: preschool@mundella.kent.sch.uk

Good practice states that a variety of feedback mechanisms should be used, including opportunities for those without access to technology. Consequently, four means were established:

- Email address – preschool@mundella.kent.sch.uk
- Survey

- By post - Mundella Consultation, C/O Mundella Primary School, Black Bull Road, Folkestone, Kent, CT19 5QX
- In person at the consultation event

Analysis of consultation responses

A total of 26 responses were received via the online survey. All responses were received before the advertised close of the consultation period and were therefore included for analysis. **Analysis of responses indicates that respondents are overwhelmingly positive and in favour of the Trust's proposals to change the age range from 4-11 to 3-11 in order to open pre-school nursery provision at Mundella Primary School.**

What follows is a report on the findings to the questions asked, including an analysis of the key themes from the free-text comments.

Question(s)	Strongly agree	Agree	Strongly agree / Agree combined	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. There is a need for additional pre-school nursery provision for children aged 3 years and above within the local area	15 (58%)	7 (27%)	22 (85%)	1 (4%)	3 (11%)
2. I support Mundella's proposals to change its age range from 4-11 to 3-11 and open a pre-school nursery class at Mundella Primary School	20 (77%)	2 (8%)	22 (85%)	1 (4%)	3 (11%)
3. I am confident that Mundella Primary School have the necessary facilities and space to be able to open a pre-school nursery class	18 (69%)	4 (15%)	22 (84%)	2 (8%)	2 (8%)
4. I am confident that Mundella Primary School have the necessary expertise and experience to be able to open a pre-school nursery class	19 (74%)	4 (15%)	23 (89%)	0 (0%)	3 (11%)

In addition to the above questions, 17 respondents also responded to the following question:

Question	Yes	No	Unsure
5. I would send my child to Mundella's proposed pre-school	14 (82%)	3 (18%)	0 (0%)

Analysis of free-text comments for the overwhelming majority in support of the proposals identified the following themes / reasons:

- Confidence in the school and the quality of education at Mundella. As one respondent stated 'I trust Mundella to do a good job'.
- Convenience for parents and/or carers, particularly in relation to 'school runs'.
- Support and improve transition into Reception year.
- The need for additional, high quality pre-school nursery places within the local area.

Not all those who were not in support provided feedback as to their reasons. Below is a summary of key reasons cited by the small minority not in support:

- One respondent (a pre-school provider) stated that they did not feel there was a need for additional pre-school provision. However, as evidenced above, this view is in the minority, with 85% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing that there is a need for additional pre-school provision.

- Two respondents cited Mundella Primary School’s 2020 Ofsted inspection and the requires improvement judgement as their main reason. The Trust is fully aware of this perceived concern. This judgement was prior to the school joining the Veritas Multi Academy Trust on 1 September 2021 and technically relates to the predecessor school. Since joining the Trust, a significant amount has been done to act on the areas identified by Ofsted, including in relation to the early years provision. Since the 2020 inspection an experienced early years leader has been appointed as an Assistant Headteacher and oversees the quality of education in early years. The Trust has a proven track-record of excellence and school improvement. For example, in the recent 2022 Ofsted inspection of Pilgrims Way Primary School (another school within the Trust), early years provision was judged to be ‘outstanding’. Since joining the Trust in September 2021, Mundella has worked in close collaboration with Pilgrims Way and the Trust is confident that Mundella’s first inspection as part of the Veritas Multi Academy Trust will result in at least a good judgement, including for early years provision. In summary, we therefore feel that this concern does not reflect the current quality of education at Mundella. This proposal process has brought to the surface that some within the local community still have a perception of Mundella based on an historic judgement. We remain committed to engaging with the local community to promote the improvements at Mundella and will continue to do this should the proposal be approved.

In addition to the 26 responses received via the online survey, one joint response was received via the dedicated email address from Folkestone Town Cllrs Jane Darling and Lucy McGirr. This response was following their attendance at the consultation & information event on 22 February. In support of the proposals, both commented ‘We formed the view that there is an unqualified commitment to this proposal, and that the reasons for a pre-school class are compelling. We agree with the statements made on the Mundella School website about the need for, and benefits of pre-school places for children... We have no hesitation in supporting the proposal for a pre-school class at Mundella School, on behalf of the Labour Folkestone Town Councillors.’

As part of the consultation, the survey also sought views on the factors that stakeholders consider when deciding where to send their child(ren) for pre-school. Analysis of free-text comments identified the following factors:

- Importance of consistency and routines
- Location – including distance from home
- The facilities on offer – including both indoor and outdoor provision
- Highly trained, experienced, welcoming and friendly staff
- Reputation, including external validation (i.e. Ofsted inspection)
- Curriculum offer

Should the proposal to lower the age range and open a pre-school nursery class be approved by the Trust, the above factors will be important considerations as part of the pre and post-opening phase of the provision.

Recommendation(s)

The consultation process achieved its aim of engaging with a range of stakeholders to seek their views on the proposal to lower the age range from 4-11 to 3-11 in order to be able to open a pre-school nursery class at Mundella. Through this engagement, the Trust is now further aware of what it needs to deliver in order to meet expectation and respond to the needs of the community.

As has been outlined on the preceding pages, there has been considerable support received for the proposal; with **85% of respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with Mundella’s proposals**. Additionally, this consultation has indicated that there is a need for additional provision for children aged 3 years and above within the local area.

As a result of the consultation, it is recommended that the Trust proceed with the submission of a full business case to the Department for Education (DfE) to seek permission to change the age range and open a pre-school nursery class in September 2024.

Despite the consultation period ending on 4 March 2024, we remain committed to continuing to engage with stakeholders throughout the pre-opening phase of the pre-school nursery class and beyond – should the DfE

approve the business case. As the project moves forward, Mundella Primary School's website will be used to update stakeholders on the development of the pre-school nursery provision, in readiness for its opening in September 2024.