



Castle Newnham School

TRADITIONAL VALUES, BRIGHT FUTURES, ONE JOURNEY

Questions and Answers

Following the sad and difficult decision by the governing body to make the admission to Castle Newnham Nursery in September 2023 its last admission, here are some of the additional questions we have been asked to address:

1. How did the governors reach the decision to close the nursery?

- a. Real-terms cuts to school funding have forced the decision. The nursery is unable to support itself through its own funding and has been drawing on the main school budget to subsidise the costs. However, now that the national school funding situation is much more challenging across the board, this is no longer possible.

2. How do you plan to both avoid redundancies among the nursery staff AND reduce the costs?

- a. The school as a whole has a large staff group and there are inevitable departures each year, which can be filled by the existing nursery staff in areas where their expertise and experience will be of great value. The school has further protected the existing staff by making a small number of one-year fixed-term appointments to start September 2023 and these posts can also be filled by current nursery staff in September 2024.

3. Does the school (4-16) currently have a balanced budget?

- a. Yes it does, with some future economies built in, but the historic surplus within the main school budget has been needed to support the finances going forward.

4. What other measures has the school been taking to maximise income?

- a. The school has offered training places via the School Direct teacher training programme for a number of years which brings an income stream. This is to be expanded to social work placements later this year. Letting out the school site extensively is something that we are already doing. Despite post-pandemic changes in the way community groups are now operating, Castle Newnham is still described as "the school that never sleeps". Letting the site is an area where we are already ahead of others in our sector. Our school shows and other community events provide additional revenue, which helps offset costs in other areas, and we have successfully applied for a number of grants to

support, for example, enhancements to music practice space (primary) and developments in the food room (secondary). Our PTA has always been very active and supportive too.

5. How much additional annual funding would be needed to keep the nursery open?

- a. To solely cover the costs of the staff for the nursery requires approximately an additional £10,000 per year just on staffing with costs anticipated to rise further. This does not include central resource costs such as finance, administration, catering, site staff, utilities and other overhead costs, which also comes from funding attached to pupils aged 4+.

6. How will the school manage the much-reported future financial challenges?

- a. All schools are reporting financial challenges. Many schools across the country are already in deficit. It is difficult to see how a continuing balanced position can be maintained without significant increases in government funding over the next 2-3 years. The school and its governing body are looking at a number of precautionary options for reducing costs across the board in consultation with the local authority as well as via exploratory conversations with local trusts. Please read the article below which highlights that the funding situation is a national issue:

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2022/oct/22/exclusive-90-of-uk-schools-will-go-bust-next-year-heads-warn>

7. Is ours the only Nursery to be struggling with financial pressures?

- a. This is part of a national picture of underfunding for Nursery provision. Government funding for free childcare hours does not cover the entire cost to the organisation. Please read the article below about Nursery funding published within the last few days:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-66022218>

8. What are school staff doing to help draw attention to the funding pressures?

- a. Many teachers have been heeding the call from the National Education Union to take industrial action, which is related to both pay, AND funding. The Principal has also spoken to the local MP as well as to local councillors and local authority officers to raise awareness of the challenges. The MP, following that conversation, has written to the Schools Minister, Nick Gibb, stating the case for support with nursery funding.

9. Is the nursery full?

- a. No and it hasn't been full for a number of years. We anticipate that we will be under capacity by around 7% for the upcoming academic year. The nursery is neither full nor over-subscribed, in spite of its high quality and situation in the heart of the community.

Where there *are* waiting lists, these are in year groups from reception upwards. Around 50% of our reception intake comes from children in our own nursery however do not anticipate that the closing of our nursery provision will have an

impact on our future intake into reception. Our early-years lead, Miss Kearney and her team, work very closely with other local nurseries around transition to reception. There are several nurseries within walking distance of the school with whom we have very strong relationships.

10. Could an external provider take over the running of the nursery?

- a. Yes, in theory and this is something the school has considered. However, the nursery would then cease to remain the school's nursery and we would no longer have control over the quality of the provision nor any decision-making authority. It is also the case that many private nurseries are equally struggling with funding, with many having to close, and so finding a suitable 'tenant' seems unlikely. If an external provider were to be interested, we envisage that the costs to parents would rise substantially.

11. What are you planning to do with the nursery building and gardens?

- a. The nursery building and gardens will be used by the youngest primary pupils and it is envisaged that the reception children will make full use of the nursery garden, extending the current outdoor space for the 90 children in these classes. There will be no additional cost to the school in changing the use of the space.

If after reading the information contained in this fact sheet and you still have further questions, please email nurseryenquiries@castlnewnham.school.