



19 October 2022

Dear Parents, Carers and Staff,

### **Re: Schools' Admission Number Consultation**

Brighton and Hove Local Authority is soon to commence a consultation regarding appropriate Published Admission Numbers [ PAN ] for primary schools. This is based on their forecast of some 620 surplus primary school places by 2024. We, the governors at Downs Infant School, have indicated that we wish to be part of this discussion.

Some of you may be aware that a similar discussion took place in 2020 when the Local Authority were keen to reduce school places throughout the city in anticipation of falling pupil applications. For a variety of reasons, the school and the governors opposed the council's decision to reduce places at Downs Infant School, successfully appealing to the school adjudicator. We felt reducing the school's intake was the wrong decision for the school at that time.

School numbers are up for debate again but this time the landscape has changed significantly and the situations are in no way comparable.

Currently, our school population is 340 out of a possible 360, and birth rates continue to fall. The only school in the locality which is full is a school which volunteered to reduce its numbers during the last round. Schools across Brighton are also contending with the current difficult economic climate.

We believe our first responsibility is to meet the needs of the children currently in our school, which requires sensible, robust and future-facing financial management. Under the current funding arrangements, if a school is under capacity on student numbers, it can place the school in a concerning financial position, as allocated budget is tied to the number of students and reduced class sizes are not economical.

We are also aware of our responsibility within our local community of schools, some of whom are struggling with financial viability. We all need to work together to ensure children in the area can go to a great local school of their choosing.

We greatly value the views of our school community and would like to invite all staff, parents and caregivers to engage with the consultation process. We would love to see many of you at the proposed in-person event on November 23<sup>rd</sup> where the Headteacher, governors, and local authority representatives will be present for face-to-face discussions and to provide further information.



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Details of the proposed consultation involving Downs Infant School are as follows:

**Tuesday November 22<sup>nd</sup>** – 10.00 to 12.00 online Teams event

**Wednesday November 23<sup>rd</sup>** 18.00 – 20.00 in-person event in the school

**Thursday November 24<sup>th</sup>** 18.00 – 20.00 online Teams event

The consultation process will run until the 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2023.

The current information regarding consultation on the Council's education website refers to previous years, but remains relevant. Meeting links will be published on the Council's website.

General information about the School's admission consultation process is available on the Council website at: <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/apply-school/about-schools-admission-consultation>

We hope you will be able to reflect on this information in the half-term break and look forward to hearing your feedback and queries, which will form part of the council's consultation process.

Yours sincerely,

Hildi Mitchell, Headteacher

Tony Fallowfield, Chair of Governors

On behalf of the Full Governing Body of Downs Infant School

