

Impact Assessment

Assessment of: Extending the age range of The Grove School from 4-11 to 3-11 years of age

1. Description of proposal

Proposal to extend the age range of The Grove School, Totnes, from 4-11 to 3-11 years of age with a proposed implementation date of September 2025.

It is proposed to extend the age range of the school so that Nursery provision can be established for 3- and 4-year olds. It is planned to offer 11 full time equivalent, term time only places, for 3- and 4-year olds.

2. Aims and objectives, and reason for change or review

There is demand in the area for additional provision for 3- and 4-year olds and in light of the increases to early years entitlements and associated funding, there is a projected increase in the demand for baby and 2-year-old places. The following changes to childcare funding for working parents are some of the key drivers for change:

- From April 2024, most working parents of 2-year-olds have been able to access 15 hours per week entitlement; this is in addition to the more disadvantaged families that will continue to get 15 hours a week of funded provision.
- From September 2024, most working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3-years-old can access 15 hours per week.
- From September 2025, most working parents of children aged 9 months up to when the child starts at school can access 30 hours funded childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year.

The places being created for 3 and 4 year olds are expected to take the pressure off other local providers by freeing up space for babies and 2 year olds to attend. The school will work closely with these providers to ensure a smooth transition for children whether that is into the Reception Class or the Nursery.

We envisage that this increase in provision will provide valuable support to the community.

It is likely that 60% of children in the age groups above will be eligible for the new entitlements. Devon County Council's annual Childcare Sufficiency Assessment Report

confirms there is a need for all-year round places for 2-year-olds and under. It is estimated that 91% of working parents will need provision all year round. There continues to be more families that want to access childcare due to the introduction of the increased funded childcare entitlements for working parents.

Children who attend the school's Nursery Class are more likely to apply for a place in the Reception Class. Through offering nursery provision for 3- and 4-year olds, the school would be able to establish the strongest links possible with families, working to support them from a younger age. The school will offer high quality, flexible provision and a wider choice of provision types for parents. Children will be supported from 3 years old to develop the skills ready to start in the Reception Class. Being able to offer places from 3-years-old will provide greater consistency and continuity for children before starting at school and enable staff to make a more significant impact through earlier identification of their needs.

3. Risk assessment, limitations and options explored (summary)

All children in the Nursery provision will be taught according to their age related expectations and have access to suitable learning provision. This includes access to experienced teachers and qualified early years staff working across the Early Years Foundation Stage. The ratio of adults to children in place will allow for work with individual children as well as different groupings. The provision will have the appropriate adult to child ratios in accordance with the statutory Early Years and Foundation Stage Framework. The physical indoor and outdoor space will be zoned and will be suitable to meet the needs of 3 and 4 year olds.

Nursery practitioners are allocated key children and carry out planning and assessment along with the class teacher. There will be planned activities for the three and four year olds that they can access at times when quieter sessions may be needed for the older children. There is indoor and outdoor space that can be used during these times. Games and toys with small parts and scissors will be distributed safely with areas sectioned off for targeted learning.

4. People affected, diversity profile and analysis of needs

Pupils on roll at The Grove School and their families;
Local families seeking nursery provision;
Staff in Reception Class
Wider school staff and governors;
Other Local Early Years Providers;

There are 310 on roll of The Grove School (Autumn 2024 school census).

Of the 310 children on roll, 48 (15%) children are eligible for free school meals.

From the Autumn 2024 school census, 10 (3%) children speak English as an additional language.

Of the 310 children on roll, there are 9 (3%) children with an EHC Plan (Education, Health and Care Plan) and 49 children (16%) identified as requiring SEN support (SEN support without an EHCP).

5. Stakeholders and their interest

Pupils, parents and carers of children on roll of school;
Local families who are seeking early years provision;
Local Early Years Providers;
Local employers;
Other stakeholders;

6. Additional relevant research used to inform this assessment

Department for Education: Statutory Framework for the early years foundation stage
Cabinet Office guidance on Consultation Principles
The Childcare Act 2006
Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations' to maintained schools') statutory DfE guidance, October 2024
School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013

7. Description of consultation process and outcomes

The Government has recently simplified the process for a maintained school to extend the age range to create school-based nursery provision. The Government has made this change to support their commitment to create or expand school based nurseries in light of the increased entitlements to early years.

The Grove School is a Local Authority maintained 'Community' school.

The process to establish a school based nursery through the extension of the school age range includes a period of consultation followed by a decision at a Full Governing Body meeting.

A consultation period will run from 12 May to 9 June 2025. Following the end of the consultation period, the full Governing Body will meet to consider all the responses to the consultation and make a decision as to whether or not to establish nursery provision for 3- and 4-year olds through the extension of the age range from 4-11 to 3-11 years of age.

The consultation will be widely circulated to all parents/carers, staff and governors at the school, as well as other local Early Years providers, all schools, County and District Councillors, MP, union representatives and equality groups.

Background information

8. Equality analysis

Under the Equality Act 2010, the local authority must consider how people will be affected by a service, policy or practice. In so doing we must give due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations across protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (for work), sex, sexual orientation, race, and religion and belief. The Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation does not prevent the Council from taking difficult decisions which result in service reductions or closures for example, it does however require the Council to ensure that such decisions are: informed and properly considered with a rigorous, conscious approach and open mind, taking due regard of the effects on the protected characteristics and the general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations; proportionate (negative impacts are proportionate to the aims of the policy decision); fair, necessary, reasonable, and those affected have been adequately consulted.

- a) Is this group negatively or potentially negatively impacted, and in what way?
- b) What could be done or has been done to remove the potential for direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or disadvantage and inequalities?
- c) In what way do you consider any negative consequences to be reasonable and proportionate in order to achieve a legitimate aim?
- d) What can be done to advance equality further? This could include meeting specific needs, ensuring equality of opportunity and access, encouraging participation, empowering people, making adjustments for disabled people and action to reduce disparities and inequalities.
- e) Is there a need to foster good relations between groups (tackled prejudice and promote understanding) and help people to be safe and protected from harm? What can be done?

All residents by geographic area

There is a potential impact on other local early years providers. However, DCC's Early Years and Childcare service have reviewed sufficiency data to ensure proposals will not have a detrimental impact on other providers. Consultation details will be sent to early years providers in the locality. The places being created for 3 and 4 year olds are expected to take the pressure off other local providers by freeing up space for babies and 2 year olds to attend. The school will work closely with these providers to ensure a smooth transition for children whether that is into the Reception Class or the Nursery.

The proposals to develop and grow childcare provision are likely to have a positive impact for families in Devon. Data supports the need for this development in provision. Proposals will increase the number of places for childcare which are available and will provide more hours of funded childcare for families as part of the national increased early years entitlements. This has the potential to positively impact parents and carers, who may be able to either return to work or training and/or increase their working hours as they are able to access more hours and/ or spaces which may become available in local childcare settings. This could help to support families financially at a time when the cost of living is high, positively impacting the health and wellbeing of families. Moreover, an increase in childcare provision will mean more children in Devon are able to access a local setting where they can socialise with other children, make friends, develop language and communication skills and build on their physical, social and emotional development. School based nursery provision can help prepare children for the transition to the Reception Class in primary school. Proposals will support the Council in meeting their statutory duties for families in supporting childcare sufficiency locally. The provision of early years places within a school can also help to support the sustainability of the school.

Age

The proposal supports the provision of additional nursery places for 3 and 4 year olds. Proposals will not affect the net capacity of the school, nor the Published Admission Number (PAN), nor put pressure on classroom space for statutory school aged children. If approved, it will provide improved local choice for families. It is considered that the provision of early years places will be positive as it will provide increased opportunities for children to access early education.

Disability (includes sensory, mobility, mental health, learning disability, neurodiversity, long term ill health) and carers of disabled people

No adverse impact is anticipated. The Grove School provides mainstream education and offers appropriate educational provision for all children for whom a mainstream placement is considered appropriate. All Early Years settings have a responsibility to provide an inclusive service for all children and families including those with special educational needs

and disabilities. Some children will require reasonable adjustments to be made. Consultation documents will be made available in a different format or language upon request.

Race and culture: nationality/national origin, ethnic origin, skin colour, religion and belief, asylum seeker and refugee status, language needs

Places would be available for all children regardless of race, ethnicity, religion or belief. The school works with families to promote a safe, welcoming and trusted provision for all families. The school promotes equality, diversity and inclusive practices to make the nursery accessible to all types of families and taking into account the protected characteristics in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Consultation documents will be made available in a different language upon request.

Sex and gender identity and reassignment (including men, women, non-binary and transgender people), and pregnancy and maternity (including women's right to breastfeed)

Proposals support quality early years provision for children, parents and staff of all genders. Breastfeeding is promoted and accommodated within school.

Sexual orientation, and marriage/civil partnership if work related

The Grove School work with all families to promote a safe, welcoming and trusted environment, respecting and taking account of the protected characteristics such as sexual orientation and marriage/civil partnership for families in line with the Equality Act 2010.

Other relevant socio-economic factors and intersectionality

This includes:

- people on low incomes, children in care and care experienced people, armed services veterans, family background (size/single people/lone parents/family carers etc.), sub-cultures, refugee status, asylum seeker no recourse to public funds.
- housing quality and tenure, education and skills, language and literacy skills, health and wellbeing.
- rural isolation, access to services and transport, access to ICT/Broadband, social connectivity.

Also consider intersectionality with other characteristics.

The proposal to develop and grow childcare provision will have a positive impact for families. The proposal will increase the number of places which are available for three and four year olds and will provide more hours of funded childcare for families as part of the national increased early years entitlements. This has the potential to positively impact

parents and carers, who may be able to either return to work or training and/or increase their working hours as they are able to access more hours and/ or spaces which may become available in local childcare settings. This could help to support families financially at a time when the cost of living is high, positively impacting the health and wellbeing of families. Without local provision, some parents/carers may need to drive to alternative provision which may prohibit some families from being able to access early years education.

The socio-economic benefits are great. Childcare enables people to work, increase working hours and or return to work benefiting local businesses and the local economy and improves life chances for children, social mobility and reduces social isolation.

9. Human rights considerations:

We need to ensure that human rights are protected. In particular, that people have:

- A reasonable level of choice in where and how they live their life and interact with others (this is an aspect of the human right to 'private and family life').
- An appropriate level of care which results in dignity and respect (the protection of private and family life, protection from torture and the freedom of thought, belief and religion within the Human Rights Act and elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations under the Equality Act 2010).
- A right to life (ensuring that nothing we do results in unlawful or unnecessary/avoidable death).

Under section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, the Local Authority must ensure there is sufficient childcare within the local area so far as is reasonably practicable, sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in the area who require childcare in order to enable them to take up, or remain in, work or undertake education or training.

10. Environmental analysis

An impact assessment should give due regard to the following activities in order to ensure we meet a range of environmental legal duties. The policy or practice does not require the identification of environmental impacts using this Impact Assessment process because it is subject to (please mark X in the relevant box below and proceed to the 11, otherwise complete the environmental analysis information below):

Devon County Council's Environmental Review Process	
Planning Permission	
Environmental Impact Assessment	
Strategic Environmental Assessment	

- a) Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.
- b) Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.

Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost

Non applicable.

Conserve and enhance wildlife

Non applicable.

Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's landscape

Non applicable.

Conserve and enhance Devon's cultural and historic heritage

Non applicable.

Minimise greenhouse gas emissions

Non applicable.

Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise)

Proposals will support more children to attend a local early years provider, reducing journey times to provision.

The places can be accommodated within the existing school building.

Contribute to reducing water consumption

Not applicable.

Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level)

Not applicable.

Other (please state below)

Not applicable.

11. Economic analysis

- a) Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.
- b) Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.

Impact on knowledge and skills

Being able to offer places from 3-years-old will provide greater consistency and continuity for children before starting at school and enable staff to make a more significant impact on their learning and development as well as enabling earlier identification of children's needs well before they start in the Reception Class. The qualification requirements of staff will meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework.

The provision of childcare enables parent to attend training. There is financial support for some students to help make childcare affordable as well as funding to enable parents to work and train.

Impact on employment levels

Proposals have the potential to have a significant positive impact on parents and carers ability to either return to work and/or increase their working hours as they are able to access more hours and/ or spaces which may become available in local childcare settings. This could help to support families financially at a time when cost of living is high, positively impacting the health and wellbeing of families.

In time there may also be a need to employ more staff within the school if numbers of children rise or if children require additional support.

Impact on local business

See above.

Parents may choose to return to work sooner after maternity leave or increase their hours of work.

Having reliable, affordable childcare supports local recruitment and retention and could mean that employees need less time off work to manage childcare responsibilities.