

Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED**  
**All**

**FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**

**Cabinet**

**24 November 2003**

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**CLOSURE OF PARKFIELD NURSERY**

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**Report of the Corporate Director Education and Life Long Learning**

**1. Purpose of the Report**

The purpose of the report is to seek Cabinet approval for the publication of formal notices proposing the closure of Parkfield Nursery at the end of the Spring Term 2004

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 Parkfield Nursery is registered as a school with the DfES. It is a nursery unit attached to the Special Needs Teaching Service based at New Parks House.
- 2.2 The closure of Parkfield Nursery is proposed from 31 March 2004.
- 2.3 Currently, Parkfield continues to provide for children with a wide range of needs. However, the number of children has reduced from a peak of 36 full time equivalent places in 1997 to below 9 fte places at the start of the Autumn Term 2002.
- 2.4 There is an increasing trend for the parents of pupils with a range of difficulties to opt for a pre-school setting closer to their home community. In Autumn 2002, the nursery received notice of an impending Ofsted inspection. At that point the unit was making provision for fewer than 10 fte pupils. Following discussion with the DfES and Ofsted, it was agreed that inspection be deferred until a decision was taken on the future of the nursery.
- 2.5 It is proposed that the amalgamation of Parkfield nursery staff and the Pre-School team be co-ordinated under the management of the current Pre-school service Leader as co-ordinator, directly responsible to the Head of Service.
- 2.6 This would consolidate the flexible approach to meeting the needs of pre-school children with Special Educational Needs which has developed over the

last 2 years in the city. It would also facilitate the deployment of staff and resources within the different settings as numbers fluctuate and as needs arise.

- 2.7 Consultation has been undertaken with staff, parents/carers of pupils together with proposed consultees as set out in section 6 of the attached supporting information. Consultation with staff and parents/carers has been in writing and via meetings. The remainder has been in writing. To date no formal responses have been received. All consultees have been informed that this proposal will be presented to Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2003.

### **3. Recommendations (or OPTIONS)**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) authorise the Corporate Director of Education and Lifelong Learning to publish statutory proposals under section 31 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to close Parkfield Nursery.; and
- (ii) authorise the ring fencing and redeployment of savings arising from the closure during 2003/04 to be earmarked for developments for pre-school pupils with Special Educational Needs.

### **4. Headline Financial and Legal Implications**

- 4.1 The budget for Parkfield Nursery for 2003/4 is £487,443.
- 4.2 The Authority would no longer be able to claim Schools Standards Grant for Parkfield therefore the allocation would be reduced by £25,000. The funding in relation to school meals, £7,402 would also be withdrawn and returned to the school meals fund. A staffing structure has been prepared which takes into account the reduction in the budget.
- 4.3 The proposed arrangements would require the transfer of the Parkfield budget allocation from the ISB for schools to the SEN schools block budget, (David Wilkin, Head of Education Finance – 7750).
- 4.4 The report identifies the correct legal steps that need to be taken to close the Nursery (Guy Goodman, Assistant Head of Legal Services – ext 7054).

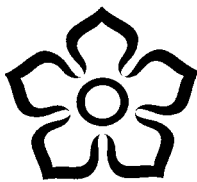
### **5. Report Author/Officer to contact:**

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**Title :** Education Officer (SEN)  
**Phone No. :**7793

**Name :** Paul Livock  
**Title :** Service Director (Education)  
**Phone No. :**7704

## **DECISION STATUS**

<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Reason</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Appeared in Forward Plan</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Executive or Council Decision</b>	<b>Executive (Cabinet)</b>



Leicester  
City Council

**WARDS AFFECTED:  
ALL WARDS (CORPORATE ISSUE)**

## **FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:**

**Cabinet**

**24 November 2003**

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### **CLOSURE OF PARKFIELD NURSERY**

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## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1. Report**

#### **Background**

##### **1.1**

Parkfield Nursery and the Pre-School Peripatetic Support team form part of the Special Needs Teaching and Student Support Service under the management of the Head of Service. Since LGR, they have worked increasingly in close collaboration to provide for pre-school pupils with special educational needs in the City.

##### **1.2**

Parkfield Nursery is attached to the Special Needs Teaching Service based at New Parks House. It is registered as a school with the DfES.

##### **1.3**

Prior to 2000, Parkfield Nursery catered for children with a wide range of Special Educational Needs from all parts of the City including some pupils from Leicestershire LEA. Some had relatively mild difficulties and went on to mainstream placement without a statutory assessment or the need for additional support, while others went on to special schools for children with moderate or severe learning difficulties.

##### **1.4**

The operation of the nursery followed the system established prior to LGR: Referrals for placement at Parkfield were made by educational psychologists, health visitors and pre-school teachers. These were considered by an admissions panel which included an educational psychologist and a paediatrician. Delivery of education, for the majority of time was confined to the nursery setting.

1.5

In Autumn 2002, the nursery received notice of an impending Ofsted inspection. At that point the unit was making provision for fewer than 10 fte pupils. Following discussion with the DfES and Ofsted, it was agreed that inspection be deferred until a decision was taken on the future of the nursery.

## **The Changing Context**

1.6

Currently, Parkfield continues to provide for children with a wide range of needs. However, the number of children has reduced from a peak of 36 full time equivalent places in 1997 to below 9 fte places at the start of the Autumn Term 2002. There is an increasing trend for the parents of pupils with a range of difficulties to opt for a pre-school setting closer to their home community. These demands are regularly supported in Tribunals and support for children in these settings has the potential to put a considerable strain on the SES contingency budget.

1.7

In September 2000, the Teacher-in-Charge (TIC) opted for part time working and the Pre-school Team Leader took up shared management of the Nursery. This provided the opportunity to develop a closer working relationship between the two elements of pre-school provision and brought about improvements in practice in the unit. The TIC has since left and increased collaborative working between the community-based service and Parkfield-based provision has enabled the development of innovative approaches, such as The National Autistic Society "Early Bird" programme – a training programme for parents and teachers.

1.8

There has also been a change in the attendance pattern at Parkfield. In line with National Guidance and local recommendations, children attend Parkfield for a maximum of three days per week. This allows time for the child either to be taught in the family home, or to participate in community-based pre-school provision.

1.9

As numbers began to diminish, the viability of the nursery became an issue. Initially, it was considered better to include consultation on the future of the nursery as part of the SEN review. However, following a formative consultation and the establishment of a Project Board, it became clear that the viability of the nursery would become critical before review proposals had been formulated. In keeping with the Authority's 'Meeting Individual Needs' SEN Inclusion Strategy, nursery staff and pre-school team members developed a collaborative approach to supporting pupils in both home and nursery settings that has proved to be highly effective.

1.10

As the initiative progressed, staff were able to develop inclusive practices in other settings. For example: supporting children on the roll of Parkfield to access part of their curriculum in a mainstream setting, or supporting children with high levels of need to access provision in their home community. Overall, the move towards

more inclusive provision and flexible deployment of staff has been viewed by parents of children supported by the Parkfield Services as having major benefits for children and their families.

## **Future developments**

### 1.11

It is proposed that the amalgamation of Parkfield nursery staff and the Pre-School team be co-ordinated under the management of the current Pre-school service Leader as co-ordinator, directly responsible to the Head of Service. The Co-ordinator would continue to manage the four elements of the early years support provided by the Service, ie:

- Core staff based predominately at the nursery
- The peripatetic support team comprising teachers, NNEBs and support assistants
- Area SENCOs
- Staff involved with Sure Start projects

### 1.12

This would consolidate the flexible approach to meeting the needs of pre-school children with Special Educational Needs which has developed over the last 2 years in the city. It would also facilitate the deployment of staff and resources within the different settings as numbers fluctuate and as needs arise.

### 1.13

The LEA has been advised to undertake the process of the formal closure of Parkfield nursery and the formal recognition of the reorganised provision.

### 1.14

The closure of the school is proposed from 31 March 2004.

## **Equal Opportunities Considerations**

### 1.15

The formalisation of arrangements in this way, would ensure a stable and consistent approach to meeting the needs of pre-school children with learning disabilities and offer a broader range of educational opportunities to those children and families .

## **2. Financial Implications**

The proposed arrangements would require the transfer of the Parkfield budget allocation from the ISB for schools to the SES schools block budget.

The Authority would no longer be able to claim Schools Standards Grant for Parkfield therefore the allocation would be reduced by £25,000. The funding in relation to school meals would also be withdrawn and returned to the school meals fund.

## **3. Legal Implications**

See paragraph 4.2 of the report

#### 4. Other Implications

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References within this report
Raising Standards	NO	
Equal Opportunities	YES	Para 1.14
Policy	NO	
Sustainable and Environmental	NO	
Crime and Disorder	NO	
Human Rights Act	NO	
Elderly/People on Low Income	NO	

#### 5. Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972

These are dealt with at paragraph 4.2 of the Report.

#### 6. Consultation

Formal consultation has been undertaken with parents and carers of pupils, staff at Parkfield and the following organisations:-

Leicestershire LEA  
Rutland LEA  
Professional Associations/Unions  
Social Services Department  
Leicestershire Health Authority  
Leicester City West PCT  
Eastern Leicester PCT  
Charnwood and North West Leicester PCT  
Hinckley and Bosworth PCT  
South Leicestershire PCT  
Melton, Rutland and Harborough PCT  
Voluntary Action Leicester  
Parent Partnership Scheme  
Early Years Development and Childcare

#### 7. Report Author

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