

Proposal Document

Thornton Primary School

*Proposal to Alter the Lower
Age Range of a Community
Mainstream School from 4
to 11 years to 7 to 11 years*

Introduction

Birmingham City Council, as the local authority for Birmingham, is consulting on a proposal to alter the age range of Thornton Primary School. We are proposing to change the age range of the school from 4-11 years to 7-11 years which will effectively remove the infant phase of the school (so remove year groups: reception to year 2). Thornton Primary School will revert to a junior phase school (so retain year groups 3 to 6 only).

The proposed changes are explained in the sections below. We are issuing proposal documents on 26th September. The representation period starts 3rd November 2016 and will run for 4 weeks until 1st December 2016.

Approval has been received from The Office of the Schools Adjudicator for the school not to offer any reception places in Sept 2017.

School Information

Thornton Primary School is a community school located in the Hodge Hill ward. The school currently caters for pupils aged 4 to 11. It can currently accommodate 720 pupils and in May 2016 there were 712 pupils on roll.

Thornton School is a linked school with Sladefield Infant School. Up to 120 Pupils from Sladefield Infant School transfer to Thornton School at year 3.

In 2009, in order to address demand in the area for additional primary places Thornton Junior School went from being a four form of entry junior school with 4 classes of up to 30 pupils each in year groups 3 to 6, to an all-through primary school with one class in reception to year 2 and five classes each in years 3 – 6.

The school also provided an additional class which left year 6 in the summer of July 2016.

Thornton School currently offers 30 places at entry into reception year group. These pupils remain on roll at Thornton Primary School until year 6, as they would do at any other all-through primary school.

At year 3 up to 120 pupils from Sladefield Infant School transfer to join Thornton Junior School, as they are linked schools.

What changes are proposed?

We are proposing to close the infant provision at Thornton Primary School. We are proposing that the school will no longer admit pupils at reception entry. It is proposed that the school over time will revert back to being a four form entry junior school linked to Sladefield Infant School.

All current infant classes will work their way through the school until they leave the school at the end of year 6.

Approval has been received from the Office of The School Adjudicator, following full consultation, for the school to not admit any pupils in reception from September 2017.

It is proposed that with effect from September 2020 the intake in year 3 at Thornton School will reduce to 120.

Why do we want to do this?

Birmingham City Council is proposing the above prescribed changes.

When Thornton Primary School became an all thorough primary school, in 2009, it was to enable the Local Authority to address the need for places within the Hodge Hill district.

Feasibility studies and different option studies were carried out for ways to provide the additional places. The only viable option available at the time was for an expansion of the then Thornton Junior School.

Whilst the expansion served the purpose at the time and addressed the need for places, having a primary school with one form of entry (one class per year) at the infant phase and five forms of entry (five classes per year) at the junior phase has proved problematic for a number of reasons;

Management & Resourcing

The set up/configuration of Thornton School with a one form of entry in infant and a five form of entry junior school was unique; with the imbalance of age groups, the managing and resourcing of such a configuration has proven to be difficult.

Standards & Attainment

As the school continues on their school improvement journey it would be more beneficial for resources to be focused on improving the attainment and standards in the junior school, where the school has greater capacity, resources and expertise.

School Community Cohesion

The transition from infant to junior is often an unsettling time for children. In Thornton School pupils from Sladefield and Thornton School come together at year 3 which can create barriers to learning whilst pupils try to adapt to new peer/friendship groups, which can be unsettling for some pupils.

School Buildings

The building solution created in 2009 has not proved to be the most efficient to run and manage; and the layout of the school has not proved to be fully viable. Some of the school buildings are increasingly becoming unfit for purpose and the current layout of the school does not allow for a natural progression of year groups through the school.

Whilst the removal of the infant phase at Thornton will cause a shortfall in the area, an alternative provision has now been identified in the vicinity to accommodate pupils within the area. It is felt that it would be more beneficial for the children and families of the area to have another school expanded and for Thornton School to revert to being a junior school only.

How will this affect pupils at the school?

Pupils will notice some changes but those are likely to be limited. The school will decrease by 30 pupils per year with effect from September 2017 when there will be no intake into reception. The decrease in number will feed through the school gradually as year on year the school will decrease by 30, so that by September 2019 there will be no infant pupils at the school.

The school will at this point (2019) become a Junior School. The larger numbers will again work their way through the junior school and the numbers will continue to reduce year on year from 150 until, in September 2023, the admission number in Thornton Junior will be 120 in all year groups 3, 4, 5 & 6.

Proposed phasing

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Entry Year</u>	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Current	2016	30	30	30	150	150	150	150	690
Approved	2017	X	30	30	150	150	150	150	660
Proposed	2018	X	X	30	150	150	150	150	630
Proposed	2019	X	X	X	150	150	150	150	600
Proposed	2020	X	X	X	120	150	150	150	570
Proposed	2021	X	X	X	120	120	150	150	540
Proposed	2022	X	X	X	120	120	120	150	510
Proposed	2023	X	X	X	120	120	120	120	480

Closing the infant provision (year groups: reception to year 2) will allow the school to focus resources into raising attainment levels and improving outcomes for year groups 3 to 6. This will help the school on their school improvement journey as they aim to become an outstanding school.

How will this affect staff?

As the school decreases in size there will not be the requirement for the current level of staffing and it is hoped that staff reductions will be met through natural wastage or redeployment. Any staff reductions will be with full consultation with the trade unions and teaching associations.

Will there be changes to the school building?

If this proposal is approved some of the older classrooms that are no longer fit for purpose will be decommissioned and eventually removed from the school site. The removal of old buildings will create more outdoor space and pupils should feel the benefit of this additional space.

Will this definitely happen?

No. Following the recent approval by the Office of The School Adjudicator for no intake in reception in September 2017, there is now a further statutory process we need to follow in order to permanently change the age range of Thornton School.

We are sending this document to all parents, pupils, staff and Governors to advise you of the changes and will publish full proposals after half term in October 2016. There will be four weeks for people to formally comment on the full proposal - this is referred to as the 'representation period'. Within two months of the end of the representation period the Council's Cabinet Member and Strategic Director will make a final joint decision. It is only at that point that we will be able to say with certainty that the Infant phase of the school is removed and the age range at Thornton School is changed to 7 -11.

What will happen if this proposal is rejected?

If a decision is taken that Thornton Primary School should not alter the age range to 7-11 to effectively cease to provide infant provision the school will continue to operate at its current size. The school will continue to operate on a site that is becoming increasingly difficult to manage. Should the school not be able to focus the main expertise and capacity on year groups: 3 to 6 (junior) it may cause standards and attainments to suffer and hinder the school on their school improvement objective. The removal of the infant provision at Thornton would enable funds to be allocated to provide alternative additional in the area in more fit for purpose accommodation.

How can I make my views known?

We will be issuing a public notice on 3rd November 2016. The representation period will be for four weeks. During this "representation" period, you have the opportunity to let us know what you think about the proposed enlargement. You can make your views known by visiting

www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/people-1/thornton (live on 3rd November 2016) or by writing to:

School Organisation Team

Education and Skills Infrastructure

PO Box 15843

Birmingham

B2 2RT

Email: eds.enquiries@birmingham.gov.uk

Tel: 0121 303 8847

Please note the closing date for comments is **Thursday 1st December 2016**. All of the issues raised during the representation will be forwarded to the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Schools and the Strategic Director for People, for a joint decision by no later than 1st February 2017.

What happens next?

The following timescale for the proposal to be implemented is for guidance only. At any point during the process, the proposal might be withdrawn or rejected by the City Council. The dates set out below meet the government requirements for us to consult fully with the people affected by the proposal and every effort will be made to keep to them.

Possible Timeline for reduction

Action	Date
Proposal document distributed	Week commencing 26th September 2016
Statutory notice published	3 rd November 2016
Beginning of 4 week representation period	3 rd November 2016
End of 4 week representation period	1 st December 2016
Final decision required by	1 st February 2017
School alters age range effective from	1 st September 2017