

Brighton & Hove City Council

Children, Young People & Skills Committee

Agenda Item 24

Subject: Proposal to suspend the admission of pupils to Hove Park Sixth Form from September 2023

Date of meeting: 7 November 2022

Report of: Executive Director Families, Children & Learning

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

The special circumstances for non-compliance with Council Procedure Rule 3, Access to Information Procedure Rule 5 and Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended), (items not considered unless the agenda is open to inspection at least five days in advance of the meeting) are that parents and students are not being informed about the proposal until Wednesday 2 November 2022 i.e. after the half term break. It is important that both existing and prospective students are made aware of the school's proposal prior to publication of the report.

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 The report details proposals of the governing body of Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre to suspend the admission of pupils into Year 12 from September 2023.
- 1.2 The governing body intend to consult on the proposals from the week commencing 7 November 2022.
- 1.3 Existing sixth form students will complete their studies in June 2024 and the sixth form provision will have no pupils in the academic years, 2024-25 and 2025-26.
- 1.4 If the proposal is agreed, the governing body intend to review the decision in relation to admissions to the sixth form from September 2026.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Committee note the proposal of the Headteacher and Governing Body for Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre to suspend the admission of pupils into Year 12 from September 2023.

2.2 That Committee note the intention of the sixth form provision remaining closed in the academic years 2024-25 and 2025-26 and the governing body to review the decision in relation to admissions from September 2026.

3. Context and background information

3.1 The governing body of Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre have carefully considered the operation of the school's sixth form provision and have proposed that no new students are admitted into Year 12 from September 2023.

3.2 Benchmark data compiled by the school shows that viable sixth forms usually offer approximately 27 subjects to meet student demand and have approximately 200 on-roll. The school have calculated that a cohort of approximately 110 students is required for the cost to deliver a sixth form provision to be cost neutral.

3.3 The table below highlights the reduction in sixth form numbers over the last 5 years and projections going forward suggest that this is not likely to change significantly in the foreseeable future.

Academic year	Admissions in y12	Total 6 th Form number
2017-18	103	187
2018-19	70	180
2019-20	89	151
2020-21	65	105
2021-22	24	50

3.4 Pupils who are already enrolled in the sixth form provision will continue their studies until they completed Year 13 in June 2024.

3.5 In September 2019 Blatchington Mill School changed its age range and removed sixth form provision which had previously been operated in conjunction with Hove Park. At that time, there had been a focus on the state of financial resourcing for post-16 provision because funding had declined. The benchmark figures given for a financially viable post-16 provision differ, but at that time were considered to be in the range of 200-250 students as a minimum.

3.6 During the Sussex Area Review and the Local Area Review at that time, concerns were expressed about the viability of post 16 provision where numbers of students are below 200 students across the sixth form

3.7 The governing body of Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre do not wish to change the age range of the school currently but review the decision to

suspend the admission of pupils into the sixth form until the academic year 2026-27 at the earliest.

- 3.8 With numbers as they currently stand, the sixth form provision is not considered to be sustainable financially. The school needs to consider the consequences on the whole institution as well as on sixth form students when group sizes are not at the optimum for learning.
- 3.9 Suspending the admission of pupils into the sixth form will allow resources to be focused on improving further the outcomes and opportunities for Years 7 to 11.
- 3.10 Across the city there is sufficient post 16 provision to meet the needs of all learners from Brighton and Hove.
- 3.11 This proposal is not a reflection of the quality of provision. The school's most recent Ofsted inspection confirmed, "the sixth form provides a secure and stable place to carry on their studies. Their curriculum is well matched to their needs. They benefit from working in a familiar environment where they are known and where they feel safe".

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The alternative option for the Headteacher and Governing Body would be for the school to continue with admissions of students to its sixth form. This is not considered to be financially sustainable.
- 4.2 Rather than suspend the admission of students into the sixth form the governors could consider the full closure of the sixth form provision and request a change in the school's age range removing the possibility of providing sixth form provision in the future. This has not been proposed by the governing body who wish to use the time to consider what future post 16 provision may be required in the future.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 A consultation document has been prepared and will be distributed to all pupils, staff and parents/carers at the school in the week commencing 7 November 2022.
- 5.2 As part of the public consultation process a public meeting to discuss the governing body's decision will be held at Hove Park School and Sixth Form Centre.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 After careful consideration, the senior leadership team and governors of the school have proposed the suspension of entry into the sixth form provision from September 2023.

- 6.2 The school will undertake a process of consultation available to staff, students and the wider public to explain the proposal and to hear views on that decision.
- 6.3 The school believe that taking this action is in the best interest of the school and its students at this time and will keep the decision under review. This will be undertaken in relation to admissions to the sixth form from September 2026 at the earliest.
- 6.4 The school have not taken the decision to request a complete closure of the sixth form provision and a formal change to the school's age range.
- 6.5 There remains sufficient post 16 provision for all Brighton and Hove learners from September 2023.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 The proposal to suspend the admission of pupils to the sixth form is expected to be financially beneficial to the school. Currently, student numbers in the sixth form are very low and it is likely this provision is being subsidised by the wider school budget. Hove Park School is currently operating with a licensed deficit arrangement and does not have capacity to continue to run a small sixth form that is not financially viable.

Name of finance officer consulted: Steve Williams Date consulted
(28/09/22):

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 The Headteacher and Governing Body of the school have the power to make the decision to suspend admissions into the sixth form as part of their wider duties to conduct and manage the school. In accordance with the principles of public law the school is consulting with those parties likely to be affected. Students who might have chosen to study at the sixth form from September 2023 will require sufficient time to consider and apply for alternative options.
- 8.2 Any decision to close the sixth form in the future would be one for the Local Authority to make, as under school organisation legislation it would constitute a permanent change to the age range of the school.

Name of lawyer consulted: Serena Kynaston Date consulted (26/09/22):

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this decision. All post 16 pupils are able to secure an on-going education or training placement in the city and can be supported to do so by the Skills and Employment Team.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 The numbers of students attending the sixth form provision are low in comparison to other post 16 provision. It is possible that some students will have to travel further to attend an education establishment and it is hoped that those journeys will be undertaken in a sustainable way.
- 10.2 How the school utilize the accommodation that will not be used for sixth form provision will determine the impact on water and energy use.

