

Proposed amalgamation of Lark Hill Nursery School and Lark Hill Primary School and change of age range

Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and

Section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013

1 Contact Details

Name and address of the local authority making the proposal:

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Stopford House, Stockport, SK1 3UR

Name of schools:

Lark Hill Nursery School and Lark Hill Primary School

Address of schools:

Northgate Road, Edgeley, Stockport, SK3 9PH

Category of schools:

Community

2 Implementation

The proposals are to discontinue Lark Hill Nursery School with effect from 25 July 2025 and change the age range of Lark Hill Primary School from 4 -11 to 2 -11 to create a primary school with nursery provision with effect from 1 September 2025

3 Reason for the proposals

Each time a nursery school Headteacher announces their intention to retire, consideration is given to whether the school should unite with a local school to become a single primary school. The Headteacher at Lark Hill Nursery School will retire at the end of the 2024/25 academic year.

We believe that amalgamating the schools will be beneficial to the local community as it enables children and families to feel part of one school community.

Lark Hill Nursery School and Lark Hill Primary School are two separate schools which share the same site. Many pupils from the nursery school move through into the primary school but not all. Each school has its own governing body, headteachers and work whilst independent from each other, they do work closely together. In December 2019, Lark Hill Nursery School was judged to be Outstanding by Ofsted and in November 2022, Lark Hill Primary School was judged to be Good.

The schools have worked closely together and have shared resources and expertise for example, with staff training. The proposals would enable the single governing body to make efficiencies in the running of the primary school (particularly in respect of leadership, finance, administration and caretaking but also in other areas such as pastoral care, IT).

Lark Hill Nursery School is currently run by the governors under a different Ofsted registration, meaning it is run as a separate legal entity to Lark Hill Primary School. By

changing its age range, the extended primary school would be able to formally take on the management of the nursery provision under the same Ofsted registration as the school.

4 Objectives

The proposals offer a coherent, consistent approach with one vision to support children between ages of 2-11 and their families in the Edgeley area.

The combined knowledge and skills of the staff means greater opportunities for individual teachers to improve their expertise, which in turn will benefit the learning opportunities for children.

A single school education can bring consistency to teaching and learning throughout a child's primary school life.

The coming together of both schools will contribute the following to our shared vision of the children and young people of Edgeley:

- Single school leadership team and Governing Body with the strategic overview of the School's 2-11 provision.
- Consistency, continuity, and familiarity in
 - Ethos, and approach to learning
 - Pastoral care
 - Curriculum
 - SEND provision and support including early identification of needs
 - Same site
- Opportunities for existing staff to professionally develop across the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2

Parents and carers of children who attend the primary school would benefit from knowing one school and one staff. They would know and understand how the school works and will not have to adjust to the demands of a different school as their child gets older.

One school would allow for high levels of consistency to be achieved throughout a pupil's time at the school including:

- Smoother transition from Nursery to Reception.
- Tracking of pupil progress and early intervention would be seamless for those pupils moving between Nursery and Reception.
- Expectations for behaviour and learning would be consistent.
- Sharing of resources / expertise and efficiency gains
- Opportunities to build on the sharing of resources and expertise across Early Years, Key Stages 1 and 2 which in turn will support an enriched curriculum.
- Opportunities for children to work across phases and support each other. Pupils will have the opportunity to interact with different aged children. This can include older pupils having some appropriate pastoral responsibilities for younger children or supporting them with reading e.g., reading buddies or play leaders.

The formal closure of Lark Hill Nursery School would mean the Nursery School staff posts would be at risk. Stockport Council knows the process of bringing two schools together as one can be unsettling for staff. As with any process of change, the interests of staff must be considered carefully, and all staff, and their unions would be consulted in accordance with the Council's policies. Stockport Council's Human Resources team would work closely with school staff throughout the transition. In line with previous successful projects of this nature, consultation will be undertaken with the Governing Body of the Primary

School with a view to securing ring-fenced recruitment for staff affected by proposals should the proposals go ahead.

The extended primary school would continue to operate on the existing school site under a single governing board and headteacher

5 Pupil Numbers and admissions

Lark Hill Nursery School currently offers 78 places for 3 and 4 year olds and 16 places for 2 year olds across the week. However, declining birth rates across the borough have resulted in falling numbers at the school with numbers in summer term 2024 of 39 3 and 4 year olds and 19 2 year olds across the week. Autumn 2024 term has 14 2 year olds and 22 3 and 4 year olds.

It is proposed to offer 26 places for 3 and 4 year olds (52 across the week) and 8 places for 2 year olds (16 places across the week). This would accommodate the anticipated need.

Children will continue to be admitted to nursery provision each term and if they are 2 after their 2nd birthday. 2 year old places are applied for directly to the School and 3 and 4 year old places are applied for to the Council.

From Sept 2026 there is a vision to create a Foundation Stage Unit. This would give the benefits of children being taught by need rather than age and having fewer transitions at a younger age.

6 Displaced pupils

No children would be displaced by the proposals.

7 Impact on the community

It is anticipated that the proposal would have a positive impact on the school community, as set out in the benefits in section 4 above. Families will still be able to access provision on the same site.

8 Rural primary schools

Neither school is designated as a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2023.

9 Balance of denominational provision

West Rise Community Infant School and West Rise Junior School are both community schools. The balance of denominational provision in the area would not change as the proposed all-through primary school would be a community school.

10 Maintained nursery schools

The Department of Education guidance says that there is a presumption against the closure of maintained nursery schools. This does not mean that a maintained nursery school will never close. The proposals set out here demonstrate that the future provision will be at least equal in quantity to that currently provided at Lark Hill Nursery School. The

provision will be as accessible and convenient for local parents as it is an amalgamation of the two current schools.

11 Sixth form provision

Neither school has sixth form provision.

12 Special educational needs provision

At the May 2024 school census, Lark Hill Nursery School had 15 children (42%) identified as in need of SEN Support which is significantly higher than the Stockport average of 17%. The Nursery School did not have any children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Lark Hill Primary School had 14 children (9.3%) with an EHCP and 44 children (29.3%) in need of SEN Support both higher than the Stockport average of 3.2% for children with an EHCP and 13.3% in need of SEN Support.

Both Schools are proudly inclusive and the extended age Primary School will be able to benefit from expertise across 2-11 age range.

Lark Hill Nursery School staff have joined the Primary School in staff training and have had extensive training on Autism, Communication, ELSA, ELKLAN and the current Nursery Teacher has completed the NASENCO training as of July 2024.

Unless a child has an EHCP, the determination of whether a child has SEN is down to individual schools in consultation with parents and the threshold varies between schools. All schools have the same duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014 to identify and provide for children with SEN. Unless there are specific provisions named in a statutory plan which would make admission incompatible with the requirement for reasonable adjustments, it is a legal requirement for all schools to comply. As the barriers to learning that a child with SEN might experience change over time, Stockport Council would expect provision to adapt and change alongside these developments. In some cases, children may cease to be identified as having SEN if appropriate adjustments are put in place to enable them to overcome barriers and to make progress in line with their peers.

13 Travel

As all children currently on roll at the nursery and primary schools would automatically have a place at the extended primary school following amalgamation, Stockport Council does not envisage any change to current travel arrangements.

14 The effect on other educational institutions within the area

Stockport Council does not believe that the proposals would have an effect on other educational institutions within the area as there would be no loss of provision or places as a result of the proposals

15 Project costs

No capital expenditure is required to implement the proposals.