



## Sir Martin Frobisher Nursery

### CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE NURSERY AT SIR MARTIN FROBISHER ACADEMY

Sir Martin Frobisher Academy (the **Academy**) is an academy operated by the REAch2 Academy Trust (**REAch2**) with a nursery provision on site which currently offers 16 places both in the morning and in the afternoon sessions (total of 32 places) for three year olds for a total of 15 hours a week (plus a bonus 3 hours), and is open during 9.00am to 3.00pm on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. At the start of the academic year the Academy were offering 30 hours a week, Monday to Friday, however this had to be reduced due financial viability.

This consultation is about a proposal to close the Academy's nursery provision with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020 and as a result to raise the Academy's lower age range from three to four years. We are therefore consulting with staff, parents and local community. We are also talking to Essex County Council.

The consultation closing date is 5.00pm on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

### Background

The local governing body (**LGB**) of the Academy, with the support of the REAch2 Executive Board, is considering the future of the Academy's nursery provision, including the possibility of its closure. The number of children on roll in the nursery provision has been falling in recent years and this has caused significant pressure on the Academy's overall budget.

In Autumn term of 2019/20, there were 7 children on roll. Over the past 3 years numbers on roll have shown a downward trend.

As with all academies and maintained schools, the Academy receives its budget for its nursery class based upon the number of children who attended in the previous financial year. This is adjusted each term according to the number of children who actually take up places. If numbers are lower than expected, funding is clawed back from the Academy's budget by Essex County Council. Early years funding cannot pay for empty places.

On average the cost of a nursery class is estimated to be around £43,000.00 per year.

The 2019/20 budget for the Academy's nursery provision was £16,000.00 and so the unanticipated additional cost to the Academy's budget to cover that estimated cost of £43,000.00 per year is estimated to be £27,000.00 annually, which is significant at a time when the Academy has other financial pressures.

Given the downward trend in nursery applications, the LGB and REAch2 need to now look at exploring and consulting on the possible closure of the nursery provision due to the fact that it is no longer financially sustainable.

For this reason, the Academy's Executive Headteacher and LGB, with the support of the REAch2 Executive Board, wish to seek your views on the future of the provision and its possible closure. REAch2 is also in consultation with Essex County Council's Early Years Team and has informed them of the current position.

REAch2 and Essex County Council greatly value the high-quality early years provision offered at the Academy but because of current budgetary constraints and the limits upon the way in which early years funding can be paid in accordance with the national funding formula, both the Trust and Council are unable to offer additional funding.

### **Alternative local provision**

In terms of alternative early years provision for children and parents, we suggest you search the local area using Essex County Council's Early Year Provision finder available here:

<https://secureweb1.essex.gov.uk/FIS>

### **Impact**

#### **What impact will the proposed changes have?**

The proposed change will close the nursery provision at the Academy and raise the Academy's lower age range from three to four years, and this means that parents who wanted their child to attend the Academy's nursery from September 2020 will have to choose an alternative early years' provider.

#### **What does this mean if my child is already in the nursery class?**

If your child was born between 1 September 2015 and 31 August 2016 your child will be starting Reception in September 2020, either at the Academy or at another school and so the proposal will not affect your child directly. If your child is spring or summer born, and you have requested to delay entry to primary school your child will have to attend alternative early years provision (see above section – Alternate local provision). This will apply to all current children attending the nursery.

#### **Can I still apply for a place in the nursery class?**

You can still apply for a place in the nursery class and if your child's name is already on the waiting list they can remain on the waiting list. However, if the nursery provision is closed, you will have to look for alternative provision.

### What alternatives has the school considered?

The LGB and REAch2 have considered a number of alternative options:

- The Academy has already moved the nursery provision to a half time provision operating on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday between 9.00am and 3.00pm.
- In addition to this, the Academy has also offered 3 bonus hours on Wednesday at no cost to parents, but this has only been taken up by a handful of families.
- Waiting to see if the increase in the entitlement to 30 hours free childcare for working parents of three and four year olds would increase the occupancy of the nursery. However, as the Academy would only be able to offer term-time provision they did not consider that the nursery would attract sufficient numbers under the extended entitlement to improve its viability.
- Admitting two year olds to the nursery class. However staffing ratios need to be higher for two year olds which would result in additional costs. This could easily offset any gain from having more children in the nursery.

### What is the process of consultation and change?

The timeline for these proposals is outlined below:

DATE	ACTION
12 <sup>th</sup> February 2020	Academy senior leaders reported to the LGB on the financial viability of the nursery provision. It was recommended that the LGB approve exploring closure via a public consultation exercise (subject to ratification from REAch2 (on 27 <sup>th</sup> February 2020)).
27 <sup>th</sup> February 2020	Following a review of the nursery provision at the Academy by REAch2, REAch2 and the Academy's LGB agreed to consult on a possible closure and to review and consider any and all responses before making a final decision on the future of the nursery.
22 <sup>nd</sup> April 2020 to 29 <sup>th</sup> May 2020	Consultation period
1 <sup>st</sup> June 2020	Analysis of responses received during the consultation to be carried out and REAch2 / LGB to make final decision whether to proceed with an application to close the nursery. The application will, if approved, be made to the Regional School Commissioner's office.
Before 31 <sup>st</sup> August 2020	Regional Schools Commissioner makes decision on nursery closure.

31 <sup>st</sup> August 2020	Last day of nursery class, if closure approved
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### **How can I respond to this consultation?**

If you have any questions or comments, please put these in writing by post or email to the following address.

Sir Martin Frobisher Academy  
Frobisher Drive,  
Clacton-On-Sea,  
CO15 2QH

Email: [frobisher.admin@smfa.org.uk](mailto:frobisher.admin@smfa.org.uk)

Telephone: 01255 427073

All correspondence should be marked "Response to the Sir Martin Frobisher Nursery Closure Consultation."

***Whilst it would ordinarily be REAch2's preference to hold a physical consultation evening (in line with ESFA's significant change guidance), because of the developing situation with COVID-19 and in light of the Government's decision on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to close schools, that is not an available option to us. Therefore, we encourage staff, parents and members of the community to email their responses to the consultation and assure all that all responses will be fully considered.***

***Alternatively, if you would prefer to talk to a member of staff about any queries you may have in relation to this consultation, please do get in touch to arrange a telephone call.***