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CEO: Mr P Glover
CFOO: Mr B March

4th May 2023

Dear Parent/Carer/Stakeholder,

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE NURSERY CLASS – APPLICATION TO THE EDUCATION AND SKILLS FUNDING AGENCY TO CHANGE THE AGE RANGE OF PUPILS AT ANGEL OAK ACADEMY AND VARYING THE ACADEMY’S DETERMINED ADMISSION ARRANGEMENTS FOR ADMISSION IN SEPTEMBER 2024

What are we consulting on?

Angel Oak Academy is a primary academy that forms part of STEP Academy Trust. We have a nursery class which currently offers part-time free early education to three and four year olds under the early years free entitlement (EYFE), for 15 hours per week, per pupil.

The class has 26 places for morning sessions during school term-time only.

This consultation is regarding a proposal to:

- (a) close the academy’s nursery class with effect from September 2023, which will raise the academy’s lower age range from three to four years; and
- (b) as a result, vary the determined admission arrangements for September 2024 by removing the priority given in the school’s oversubscription criteria to pupils who attend the nursery who are eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium Funding and attend the Angel Oak nursery.

Why are we doing this?

The leadership team of Angel Oak Academy has engaged with its Academy Committee and Board of Trustees to consider the future of the academy’s nursery class, including the possibility of its closure.

The take up of nursery places is very low, with only 11 places (42%) filled at the time of publication of this consultation.

There are currently only 6 places confirmed for September 2023.

As with all nursery provisions in Southwark, Angel Oak Academy receives nursery funding based upon the number of children who actually take up places each day. Early years funding does not pay for empty places.

If full, the nursery would generate around £93,542 of income per academic year, based on current funding of £6.15 per hour per pupil.

The current forecast income for 2022/2023 is £38,000 and based on confirmed places for 2023/2024 the forecast would be £21,586.

The cost of the nursery is approximately £73,079 per year (including both staff costs and resources). This will result in a loss of around £35,075 in 2022/2023. Based on current confirmed numbers, the forecasted loss for 2023/2024 (without factoring any increase to costs) would be £51,493.

These losses must be covered using funding provided by the government for our primary aged children (year R - Year 6), which has a detrimental effect on the resources we can offer across the rest of the school.

As an organisation, we value the difference that a nursery can make, in preparing children for primary education and aiding interpersonal development. We believe this is less effective in very small groups.

The Board of Trustees therefore wish to consult on the future of the nursery provision at Angel Oak Academy and its possible closure

What impact will the proposed changes have?

The proposed change will close the nursery class at Angel Oak Academy and raise the academy's lower age range from three to four years. This means that parents who wanted their child to attend the school's nursery from September 2023 will have to choose an alternative Early Years provider.

It also means that we will remove from Angel Oak Academy's determined admission arrangements for 2024-2025 the current point 4 of the oversubscription criteria, which gives priority to those pupils who are (a) eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium funding and (b) attend the nursery (the "**Existing Arrangements**"), and in consequence relabel the existing point 5 (All Other Children) as point 4 (the "**New Arrangements**").

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

The proposed changes would take effect from 1st September 2023 (subject to consultation and approval by the Department for Education), so if your child is due to start Reception in September (i.e. they were born between 1 September 2018 and 31 August 2019), including if their entry will be deferred until later in the academic year, they will be unaffected. Additionally, the Existing Arrangements will still apply to them for admission in September 2023 if they are eligible.

If your child is in the nursery class now, but was born on or after 1 September 2019, or if they are spring or summer born and you have requested to delay entry to primary school, you would need to find a place for your child at another early years provider for September 2023. If you apply for a place for your child to start in Reception at Angel Oak Academy in September 2024, such an application will be made under the New Arrangements.

Alternative local provision

There are also a number of other nurseries and play groups in Southwark, which include: The Grove Nursery, Anne Bernadt Nursery, Nell Gwynn Nursery, Burgess Park Nursery. Further information is available at: <https://www.southwark.gov.uk/childcare-and-parenting/childcare/pre-schools>.

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

At this stage we are only consulting with our stakeholders and no decision has been made.

You can therefore still apply for a place in the nursery class, however if the proposal is approved the nursery will close and we would therefore encourage you to consider alternative provisions in conjunction with Angel Oak Academy.

What alternatives has the school considered?

The Board of Trustees has considered a number of other options:

Offer more hours

We could offer up to 30 hours, with parents/carers who are not eligible for the full 30 hours of funding given the option to purchase top-up sessions. This could increase income, but would significantly increase our costs and given the low current occupancy, would place a higher level of money at risk.

Admitting two year olds

Lowering the age range could increase income, by offering younger children the opportunity to attend. Unfortunately much higher ratios of adults to children are required for 2 year olds, which would result in rising costs which would likely offset any income.

Why are you proposing to amend the determined admission arrangements for admission to Reception in September 2024 as part of this proposal?

If the proposal to close the nursery is approved following consultation, the admission arrangements for admission to Reception in September 2024 will need to be varied. This is because the oversubscription criteria currently give priority to children who attend the nursery who are eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium Funding. If there are no children attending the nursery, then this priority category will be redundant and the variation will therefore remove it from our admission arrangements.

What will happen after consultation?

We will consider your views and make a decision about whether to proceed with the closure. If the decision is made to proceed, a report outlining the results of the consultation will be included in an application to the Department for Education (DfE), who will make the final decision.

What is the process of consultation and change?

The timeline for these proposals is outlined below:

Date	Action
29 th March 2023	Decision by Board of Trustees to consult on the process for closure of the nursery.
4 th May 2023 – 7 th June 2023	Consultation period
Monday 15 th May 2023	Consultation evening at Angel Oak Academy.
8 th June – 9 th June 2023	Analysis of responses received during the consultation and decision by the STEP Academy Trust trustees. Then: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) If the decision is to close, an application for approval (also called a 'significant change' application) will be sent to DfE and we will inform stakeholders using our newsletter and website.2) If the decision is to remain open, we will inform stakeholders using our newsletter and website.
25 th July 2023	Last day of nursery class, if closure agreed

Having your say

A consultation event will be held at Angel Oak Academy on Monday 15th May 2023 at 4.00pm.

We welcome feedback from everyone and this can be given by completing the Consultation Questionnaire overleaf and returning in any of the following ways:

- By post to: Angel Oak Academy, Burcher Gale Grove, Peckham, London SE15 6FL
- By email to: Admissions@stepacademytrust.org

Hard copies of this letter and the enclosed Consultation Questionnaire can be requested from Cheryl Gilbert, STEP Executive Secretary – admissions@stepacademytrust.org

Only feedback received by 12 noon on **Wednesday 7th June 2023** will be taken into account.

Consultation Questionnaire on the Proposed Closure of Angel Oak Academy Nursery and Raising of Lower Age Range from Three to Four Years and varying the determined admission arrangements for Angel Oak Academy for admission in September 2024

Please tell us in what capacity you are responding by ticking just one box:

	Please tick ✓
Parent of a child attending Angel Oak nursery class	
Parent of child/children attending Angel Oak (years R-6)	
Staff at Angel Oak Academy	
Other (please state)	

Do you agree with the proposal to close the nursery at Angel Oak Academy, and consequently amend the admissions arrangements to remove the priority given to those enrolled in the nursery who are eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium Funding?

	Please tick ✓
Strongly agree	
Tend to agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Tend to disagree	
Strongly disagree	
Don't know	

Do you have any further comments regarding this proposal?