

Consultation Summary Document

Lowering the school age range at William Lilley Infant and Nursery School



Total number of responses: 37

Questions:

1. Do you think that the age range at William Lilley Infant and Nursery School be lowered to 2 – 7 years from the existing 3 – 7 years?	Yes 70%	No 16%	Neither agree nor disagree 14%
2. Do you approve this proposal which would enable the school to offer provision for 2 year olds from 1st September 2025?	Yes 78%	No 11%	Neither agree nor disagree 11%

Feedback responses:

Parent/Carer at William Lilley	Parent/Carer with a child at another school/setting	Governor at William Lilley	Governor at another school/setting	Member of staff at William Lilley	Member of staff at another school/setting	Pupil at William Lilley	Pupil at another school/setting	Other (ie resident)
65%	0%	14%	0%	16%	3%	0%	0%	3%

Further comments from 'Yes' responses:

Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• With the school being in the heart of the community of Stapleford it makes complete sense to be able to offer places in nursery for 2 year olds. Enabling this offer ensures there is a consistent route through William Lilley for children, which provides a safe, supportive and nurturing environment for children and families. The change in age will allow William Lilley to further extend their reach and support those families that need it most. It will also support the school to continue to grow and excel with their Early Years offer.• I believe this is a brilliant idea as we struggled with the transition period of our child into nursery the socialising side of nursery is fantastic for children followed by the routine• My daughter is starting reception in September so do not feel this directly affects us but do feel it is a good idea for those with younger children.• I think it will be a really important provision for parents and the wider community in Stapleford. In these pressured times parents need any help they can get to work and provide for their families.• Very positive use of early years learning skills present already in staff at the school.

Further comments from 'No' responses:

Comments and Response from William Lilley Infant and Nursery School
<p>Response from 'Other (ie local resident)'</p> <p>I think this is too young to take children into a school setting.</p> <p>We have carefully considered the impact of children starting within a school environment at an earlier age. Evidence suggests there is a positive impact on The Education Endowment Foundation has completed research into an earlier starting age and states;</p> <p>“Earlier starting age” refers to increasing the time a child spends in early years education by beginning at a younger age. In the UK, an earlier starting age would typically mean being enrolled in nursery or pre-school from the age of two or three...”</p> <p>Further positive impacts can be seen throughout all learning outcomes (which in Early Years includes the ‘Prime areas’ of personal, social and emotional development alongside communication and language and physical development) The research continues to state:</p> <p>“Beginning early years education one year earlier than usual appears to have a moderate positive impact (+three months) on learning outcomes. Positive effects have been detected for early reading outcomes in the first year of primary school as well as early language and number skills.”</p> <p>Response from 'Parent/Carer of a child at William Lilley'</p> <p>In my opinion, children of this age are far too young and a school environment can be daunting for them even from ages 3+ Not many children aged 2 are potty trained and I don't think this transition is nurtured particularly well - alongside teaching the children the correct way to care for themselves when going to the bathroom. Extra support is needed here already, so please do ensure this is actioned prior to even younger children being in this setting, as not all children are able to verbalise their needs and I think this needs urgent attention.</p>

At William Lilley, for a number of years we have taken children into our nursery as a 'rising three' (the beginning of the term as they turn three). These children are two as they join the school and evidence within the school has shown that the opportunities that this gives children to settle into the routines has been beneficial to their transition and overall development.

As a school we are fortunate to have practitioners that know the EYFS curriculum inside out. They know the requirements for two-year-olds, the changing, the sleeping, the recording, all the health and safety and the safeguarding requirements. We have specific support for potty training which is currently managed with staff and families working together to help meet the needs of our individual children.

As a school, we are outward thinking; ensuring that our practice provides the best opportunities for the youngest children in our care. We are engaging with research, networking with other settings in order to ensure our practice and provision supports our vision, values and ethos in being a 'nurturing, inspirational family who are determined to succeed'.

Our proposal is to support the two year olds within a bespoke group with a curriculum and separate environment tailored to the needs of these younger children. This will be with higher staff to pupil ratios than given to our three year olds, thus further supporting transition and opportunities for our younger children.

Response from 'A member of staff at another school/setting'

We wish to raise serious concerns regarding this proposal and the framing of the consultation itself.

Firstly, the letter and consultation are clearly biased towards achieving a positive outcome, without presenting a balanced view or acknowledging the potential negative impact on the local early years sector. It claims to offer "first quality education" in a school setting—this is both misleading and dismissive of the excellent provision already delivered by local PVI nurseries. PVI providers, like **Little Plums Nursery**, are held to the same Ofsted standards and often exceed expectations. Schools are not better equipped than nurseries in delivering high-quality early years education.

As a school we are aware that Stapleford have many excellent Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) providers, many of whom we work in collaboration with. The extension of provision within William Lilley can ensure that parents have a wealth of choice for an Early Years Place to help meet their own family needs.

Furthermore, there is no current shortfall in local provision for two-year-olds. Our own two-year-old room is only 50% full, and we know other local providers are also operating below capacity. This proposal risks undermining the viability of existing providers, which could ultimately reduce parental choice if settings are forced to close due to reduced numbers-

We have fully engaged with Nottinghamshire County Council Early Years Team in identifying the need within the locality. Further details of this can be seen within the response to the final comment below.

Our initial interest has been shown by families of children on the waiting list for nursery within the school and siblings of children who already attend the school. Our proposal to formalise our two year old provision beyond that of 'rising threes' is in-line with the sufficiency report prepared by Nottinghamshire County Council Early Years team.

The proposal also states this expansion is partly to support the school's financial sustainability and infrastructure challenges. If the school is already facing pressures on its roll, then investing in a costly early years unit may not be the best use of public funds. That money could be better spent on improving outcomes for existing pupils.

We already have established Early Years provision at William Lilley. Our current nursery and expansion plans are self-financing from Early Years Funded places and therefore does not impact upon the school budget. Evidence suggests that the expansion plans will support in improving outcomes for pupils over time.

There is also no clarity in the communication that joining the nursery does not guarantee a school place. This is a crucial omission and risks misleading parents into thinking their child's transition to Reception is assured when it is not. If no guarantee exists, then the argument about smoother transition loses its credibility, as those children may have to move again to a different school.

Initial interest has been shown from families who are already within the school community. Admission into our two year old group will ensure transition into our nursery group. Our nursery supports transition to William Lilley and our feeder school; therefore there is parental choice as to which setting to choose as children transition into full-time school. Our Reception is not over-subscribed and proportionally we would anticipate that 60% - 70% of nursery children continue to transition from our Nursery into Reception at William Lilley.

Our proposed Nursery provision provides 39 places and Reception offers 45 places, therefore although transition into the school is managed by the Local Authority following our Reception admission criteria, historical data indicates that there are enough places to support 70%+ of our current Nursery as well as further places for children wanting to transition into Reception from other PVI or home settings.

We would also like to ask the following direct questions:

Is the school—and more importantly, its teaching staff—equipped and appropriately trained to manage two-year-olds who are not yet potty trained, particularly given that more children are developing this skill later?

This has been considered within a response above. However, as stated children are developing this skill later and therefore provision and policies are already in place to support pupils who are not yet potty trained alongside other requirements and needs such as communication and language.

Will the school guarantee that children joining at two will be offered a Reception place at William Lilley? If not, what transition benefit is actually being offered to these children and families?

Consideration has been given to the proposed pathway and demand for places into Reception as shown in a response above. Historical data indicates that places are likely to be available any families wishing to choose to apply for a Reception place for their child.

Finally, this proposal appears to have been developed without sufficient engagement with local PVI providers. We would encourage the Local Authority to assess the actual sufficiency landscape before supporting an expansion that could have long-term consequences for sector stability and parental choice.

William Lilley have consulted with Nottinghamshire County Council Early Years Team to ascertain the sufficiency of two-year-old places within the school's ward area. We are aware that the Local Authority make it a priority to ensure that they are not agreeing to maintained schools lowering their age range where there is a high number of vacancies within an area. The sufficiency report prepared by the Nottinghamshire County Council Early Years team that details the sufficiency landscape for the Stapleford South West ward. This report and the data contained within it, was what supported the decision making regarding the sufficiency of places. This is available for review on our school website by visiting www.williamlilley.notts.sch.uk