

Emmer Green Kindergarten

85 Grove Road, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LJ

Noise Management Plan

Background

This plan sets out the Noise Management Plan for the above address which operates as a children's day nursery and is seeking expansion on land adjacent to the current nursery site to include additional classroom space for 30 children on Land to the rear of 88 Knights Way, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8RH.

Relevant Policies, Standards & Guidance

There is no specific British Standard or guidance document which considers noise emissions from children using an external play space. It is therefore necessary to consider guidance within other relevant standards and documents.

The current revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (referred to as NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and provides guidance on how these are expected to be applied.

Paragraph 191 of the NPPF states that, "Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development." In doing so, the NPPF seeks to avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life.

Paragraph 194 clarifies the focus of planning policies and decisions should be on whether proposed development is an acceptable use of land, rather than the control of processes or emissions (where these are subject to separate pollution control regime). And that planning decisions should assume that these regimes will operate effectively.

This provides clear guidance that noise must not be considered in isolation but as part of the overall scheme, taking into account the overall sustainability and associated benefits of the proposed development.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has published additional guidance and clarifications within the Planning Practice Guidance – Noise (PPG-N). Paragraph 003 of the PPG advises, "Plan-making and decision making need to take account of the acoustic environment and in doing so consider:

- Whether or not a significant adverse effect is occurring or likely to occur;
- Whether or not an adverse effect is occurring or likely to occur; and
- Whether or not a good standard of amenity can be achieved.

In line with the Explanatory Note of the Noise Policy Statement for England, this would include identifying whether the overall effect of the noise exposure is, or would be, above or below the significant observed adverse effect level and the lowest observed adverse effect level for the given situation."

Paragraph 005 of the PPG provides outline guidance how it can be established whether noise is likely to be a concern. It confirms that noise has no adverse effect so long as the exposure does not cause any change in behaviour, attitude or other physiological responses of these affected by it. If the noise exposure is at this level, then there are no specific measures required to manage the acoustic environment.

If the exposure increased further, it crosses the 'lowest observed adverse effect' level boundary which is when the noise starts to cause small changes in behaviour and attitude (such as turning up the volume on the television or need to speak more loudly to be heard). Given that the noise emanating from the nursery is only likely to be arising from children crying (for small period of time) and / or playing, then the PPG advises that consideration needs to be given to mitigating and minimising those effects (taking account of the economic and social benefits being derived from the activity causing the noise).

The nursery already operates mitigation measures, as explained in the operational procedures section below.

Operational Procedures

Day nurseries are often considered vital parts of the early year's education provision for the local area and could be regarded as a significant benefit to the wider community.

Other contextual factors should also be considered such as the fact that the outdoor play area will only be used during certain controlled hours and during weekdays only. In addition, it is also important to note that 13 weeks out of the year (during the school holidays) the nursery has a lower number of children and staff attending as the nursery offers term time only options which the majority of parents with school age siblings often prefer. The nursery is also closed to all children three weeks per year (Easter Monday week; August Bank Holiday week and the week between Christmas and New Year) meaning no noise will be present during these closure periods.

Additionally, schools, nurseries and children's play areas are often located in housing areas and operate without causing noise nuisance on neighbouring residents. In this regard, there is also a primary school a short distance demonstrating the site proposals are in keeping with the local area.

Notwithstanding the above, this nursery has already been operational at its current site for six years with no noise complaints from local residents. This premise is also located close to residential properties, so has sound and workable noise control practices already in place, and experienced staff that implement and adhere to these working practices. These include the following measures:

- Use of the garden is controlled via a structured rota of when children are allowed to enter and exit the garden. In the afternoon, many children take a nap, so this reduces the number of children which access the outdoor area to a very minimal amount. Therefore, in reality the garden is only really used sparsely throughout the day, particularly when taking into consideration arrival time, meals and nap times.
- Outdoor Learning - is essential to child development and can be hard to come by in many nurseries, all children at Emmer Green Kindergarten spend time outside every

day, taking part in a wide range of stimulating activities. We encourage our children from a young age to take a keen interest in the outdoor environment.

- The nursery operates a strict behaviour management policy which focuses on calm behaviour and all nursery staff are trained in how to manage behaviour appropriately and includes low volumes of speech (indoor voices).
- The nursery operates an extremely holistic approach which ensures that crying, screaming and shouting is a very rare occurrence within the setting. Babies crying would never be without adult comfort within a few minutes as they are within a 1:3 ratio so this reduces the propensity for noise arising from crying to a bare minimum.
- Safeguarding of children means that doors are never left open.
- The ratios of staff to children are as follows:

Under 2's: 1:3

2-3 years: 1:5

3-4 years: 1:8

These ratios are meant that the nursery meets its Ofsted requirements to ensure that it is always upholding a calm and nurturing environment. This ratio of staff to children also ensures that the above-mentioned noise and behaviour management policy is strictly followed.

- The nursery is overstaffed in terms of children to adult ratios which ensures that their behaviour management can be adhered to effectively. This ensures that even during outside play, noise is kept to a minimum.
- A Transport Statement has been prepared which details likely drop offs and pickups. Parents are asked to respect the amenity of neighbours during pickups and drop offs and are asked to not slam doors or leave cars idling. The noise from cars arriving and leaving the site would be imperceptible from any other vehicular activity from neighbouring residential properties and will only be limited to opening hours of the nursery so no early mornings, late nights or weekend activity.

The above operational practices have proven effective to date as the nursery has not resulted in any noise complaints. Conversely, the nursery management has frequently received positive comments from immediate neighbours. The neighbour to the immediate side of the current nursery site has expressed gratitude and is thrilled with the joy that the nursery has brought to the area.

Accordingly, it is considered that the development would not generate a level of noise that would result in a substantial residential impact but it is recognised that some additional noise would be generated. Accordingly, an appropriate noise management plan should continue to be implemented to help control noise to nearby residents. This will incorporate the following elements:

Responsible Persons

Emmer Green Kindergarten has a named person (Rebecca Hartley – Director) responsible for ensuring that the noise management plan is implemented and maintained across the duration of which Emmer Green Kindergarten remains in practice at the named address.

Hours of Operation

The nursery is open 49 weeks per year, 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. Outdoor areas are only used between 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday, 49 weeks per year.

Arrival and Departure Procedure

Parents, staff and children are asked to respect the amenity of neighbours during pick ups and drop offs and are asked to not slam doors or leave cars idling. All individuals entering and leaving the nursery site will do so through the current nursery site in Grove Road. No access, except emergency access, will be permitted from the proposed site in Knights Way. Access to and from the site is only permitted Monday to Friday between the hours of 8am and 6pm.

Settling in Procedures

All age groups have experienced and qualified staff caring for them daily and work on the following ratios:

1:3 for children aged under 2 years

1:5 for children aged 2-3 years

1:8 for children aged 3-5 years

Children are greeted in their classroom by familiar and experienced staff. Familiar staff and ratio adherence ensures that a calm and welcoming environment is created for children which maintains a state of calm within the premises and avoiding any increase for agitated infants and spreading disorientation amongst others. When in both the outdoor areas staff should be mindful of neighbours and use calm, gentle voices when interacting with children and others.

Children who are upset in the outdoor areas and whom cannot be calmed should be taken back inside after a reasonable period (5 minutes).

Music and musical instruments are not to be used in the outdoor areas.

Staff will ensure and remind children to use gentle voices and not to shout or scream.

On site calming space

The nursery provides a calming space within the current nursery provision, which provides sensory equipment to enable children who are agitated or in need of sensory stimulation to calm.

Staff Conduct

All staff are made aware of the requirements of the Noise Management Plan and are provided with a copy of the document, which is covered in training sessions and regular staff supervisions. A copy is also placed with the staff areas and within external areas to ensure compliance.

Complaints Procedure

In the event of a noise complaint being made via phone, email or in person, the recipient must immediately escalate to a member of the nursery management team to take appropriate action and to remove or minimise the noise at source. In every instance, the nursery management will endeavour to contact the complainant to both establish further details of the incident and to share the findings of internal investigations.

Individuals wishing to make a complaint regarding noise from the nursery can email info.emmergreenkindergarten@gmail.com 24hrs a day and this email is regularly checked.

All noise complaints will be logged in the designated noise complaints log book and will be acted on in a proactive and positive manner. Documented complaints and actions will be maintained and made available upon request to the Local Authority.

This will all be kept in the Noise Complaints file located in the Nursery Office.

Conclusion

The above provides answers to the questions and concerns which may be raised by the Council's Environmental Health Officer and demonstrates that the nursery has the ability to successfully operate adjacent to residential properties without causing any demonstrable impact on neighbouring amenity. Emmer Green Kindergarten would accept a condition that would ensure that the noise management mitigation measures outlined above would be adhered to in perpetuity to ensure that the proposed use of the site in Knights Way would not result in any future amenity concerns.