

## **CABINET MEMBER DECISION**

### **18 March 2022**

# **APPROVAL FOR PUBLIC NOTICE OF THE PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE AGE RANGE OF CHAWSON COMMUNITY FIRST SCHOOL**

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#### **Relevant Cabinet Member**

Councillor M J Hart

#### **Relevant Officer**

Director of Children's Services

#### **Local Member**

Councillor B Brookes

#### **Recommendation**

- 1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education is recommended:**
  - (a) to approve the publication of the Public Notice for the proposal to alter the age range of Chawson Community First School by two year groups from 5-11 years to 3-11 years from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022 in accordance with the delegated authority for making prescribed alterations to maintained schools.**
  - (b) to note that in accordance with the delegation of authority given by the Leader on 25 April 2018 the Director of Children Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education will determine the proposals should no objections to the Public Notice being received; or**
  - (c) to review all representations received during the Public Notice stage should objections be received in order to decide on the proposal.**

#### **Background**

- 2. A request has been made by Chawson Community First School to the Local Authority to consider a change of age range at the school from 5-11 years to 3-11 years.**
- 3. Chawson Community First School currently offers 3-year-old provision as a Governor-led, non-maintained nursery. Under this proposal, the provision would become part of the school. This would enable the school to improve communication and administration and bring the nursery currently on site fully under the school umbrella. This would have no impact on the amount of nursery places in the area.**

4. As per the prescribed alterations regulations outlined in 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools: Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers October 2018' any proposal to alter the age range of a community school must follow the statutory process, which includes a 4-week representation period before a decision is taken. In this instance, only the Local Authority can be the formal proposer and decision maker of such alterations.

5. In April 2018 the Leader of the Council delegated authority for the publication of statutory proposals for prescribed alterations to maintained schools to the Director of Children Services and Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education (Previously Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) as set out in **Appendix 1**. This delegated authority was endorsed by Cabinet in January 2020.

6. The Council's revised policy on responding to change of age range requests (approved by Cabinet 30 January 2020) identified several criteria that must be considered and satisfied prior to a decision being taken to propose such a change. These conditions have been reviewed in relation to this proposal and summarised below:

*a) The school has a good or outstanding Ofsted judgement, or can demonstrate how the change would support improvement at the school.*

7. The school received an Ofsted judgement of 'good' in March 2015, and a further short inspection took place on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2019 whereby the inspector concurred with this rating. Reference to forward momentum from leadership and progress of the school and leaders to effectively tackle the areas of improvement from the 2015 inspection were included in the Ofsted report.

8. Chawson First School early years practitioners, as stated within the Ofsted Report (2019)<sup>1</sup>, have a clear understanding of children's specific needs and interests and plan learning accordingly. For example, children are well supported to develop their communication, writing and social skills.

*b) Open and fair consultation has taken place with parents and other relevant stakeholders and the school can clearly demonstrate how any objections or issues raised will be managed.*

9. A consultation period was held by the school between Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022 and noon on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2022 (12pm close). The consultation was transparent with a one-month public consultation period for stakeholder responses to be made. There were online and paper copy versions of the consultation available from the school and an online event was held where interested parties could ask questions directly about the proposal.

10. In making the request to the Local Authority to consider this change, they provided a breakdown of responses and demonstrated how any objections or issues raised have been managed. This is attached as **Appendix 2**.

*c) The school involved can demonstrate the capacity to manage any curriculum changes or has secured appropriate support to do so.*

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<sup>1</sup> [Ofsted Report – Chawson First School – 06/03/2019 - \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports/Ofsted-Report-Chawson-First-School-06/03/2019)

11. Chawson First School has experienced and suitably qualified early years practitioners within their staff due to currently running the Governor-Led nursery on site, and to date have been able to offer higher than normal ratios of adults to children. Therefore, initial staffing of the facility is already in place.

12. If the proposal is agreed, future staffing arrangements will be made in accordance with guidelines and adhere to the recommended ratios needed.

13. The consultation document references securing consistent, quality staffing for our teacher-led pre-school (nursery).

*d) The school involved can demonstrate that appropriate facilities, staff, and systems will be in place, including how they will manage additional revenue costs.*

14. Initially, no new accommodation would be required as existing classrooms within the main school building will be used. There are plans for a purpose-built nursery space within the school grounds. This is being funded by the contribution of Section 106 developer contributions to the value of £513,000. This project is aimed to be completed in Spring Term 2023 and will be subject to the usual planning consultation process.

15. The new build will allow Chawson First School to maintain the school accommodation to return to a Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of 90 should the need arise to take higher cohorts in the future. This is to ensure that the local authority can safeguard a sufficiency of statutory school places in the area long term.

*e) There is an agreed, clear, and practical pathway for children to move on from each school affected by the change. The consultation document should clearly inform parents of all their options for future school places for their children. Where a pathway school has not formally changed its admissions policy but has committed in writing to do so, this should be attached to the consultation document and it made clear to parents that this is subject to a formal consultation on admissions change by the pathway school.*

16. This proposal does not change the school admissions arrangements for reception children who will still need to apply through Admission Authorities for school places.

*f) Any reduction in Published Admission Number or change in admission criteria required has been consulted upon and agreed, or a clear and transparent timetable for this change has been provided to stakeholders as part of the consultation process.*

17. There is no admissions criteria change required in order to implement this proposal.

*g) There is no significant detrimental impact on other local schools.*

18. As of September 2021, there was an insufficiency of early years places within the Droitwich Spa Southwest ward where Chawson First School is located. Since opening the governor-led nursery there has been an increase in demand from 30 children in the Autumn term up to 45 children in the spring term. The setting expects to be full by the summer term with all 48 places allocated. Currently the setting is taking 3 and 4 year-olds, however this may be revisited once the new nursery building is completed.

19. Within the ward there are currently three day nurseries within 0.2 miles of the school. There is one other maintained nursery at Westlands First School, St Joseph's has a governor-led pre-school and St Peter's has a pre-school playgroup. In addition, RGS Dodderhill have a nursery.

20. Furthermore, there has been a large amount of housing built on the south side of Droitwich within the wards of Lovett and Claines and Droitwich Spa Southeast Wards, which could yield further numbers of early years aged children which will also require places within the area. Since September 2017, births in the Chawson First School catchment area have increased from 69 births to 142 births in September 2021.

21. WCF aim to retain sufficient and good quality education provision within Worcestershire within the early years sector. With the increasing housing and birth rates within the area, and the evidence that Chawson's nursery should reach capacity by the summer term 2021, the reduction in numbers at other settings is not anticipated to be a long-term issue.

22. Therefore, as there is a clear sufficiency need for these places, there will be no detrimental impact for other local schools.

*h) The proposal is clear and precise on how the school will continue to work with other local schools to the educational benefit of all children.*

23. The proposal has been clear how this change will benefit the education of children. There will be no change in how the school interacts with other local schools.

*i) Where the proposer is a small, rural school, as defined by the DfE rural schools' policy and WCC small schools' policy, the proposal makes it clear how the proposed change will support the school to stay viable and so support local need and parental preference.*

24. This proposal does not affect any small, rural schools.

*j) Any proposals should support the best education for all children in the area. Proposers should be clear how their proposal will work alongside the existing school systems operating in the area.*

25. The school's consultation documentation provides the following detail on how this change will support the best education for all children in the area:

- Children attending the three-year-old provision can be fully integrated into the school community. Registration of all children will be consistent, as will tracking of attendance and attainment.
- The school offers a fully inclusive environment, linking with Health and Social Care professionals, which allows the school to identify a need for early help and address barriers which are preventing swift progress whilst developing excellent relationships with families. The introduction of children into this journey from three years of age will further this programme and support the school to continue to improve outcomes for children and support vulnerable families.

*k) Funding for any necessary accommodation changes has already been secured*

26. A new bespoke permanent Early Years classroom is proposed which will be funded by S106 funding totalling £513,000. The Local Authority are at Grant Agreement stage

with Chawson First School. As of this agreement all additional cost will be met by the school.

- l) Appropriate planning permission and any other consent required have been secured or a clear and transparent timetable for this change has been provided to stakeholders as part of the consultation process*

27. Chawson First School have initial plans in place for a purpose-built pre-school space within the school grounds. This is aimed to be completed in Spring term 2023 and will be subject to the usual planning consultation process. Within the consultation the age range change is proposed from the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2022 and the provision can be supported within the main school until the new build is delivered.

## **Recommendations**

28. Given the above information, the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education is recommended to approve the publication of public notices for this proposal and approve the commencement of the representation stage for a significant change in line with the prescribed alterations regulations.

29. The Public Notice period is proposed to begin on 28 March 2021 and will end at noon on the 25 April 2022, following which, a final decision on the approval of this proposal will be made, taking into account any representations received during this period.

30. If no objection is received in this period, then the final decision will be made by the Director of Children's Services in accordance with the agreed delegation. Should objections be received, all representations will be reviewed, and a final decision made by the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education.

## **Legal, Financial and HR Implications**

31. Capital funding will be provided through S106 where the provision of additional education provision at Chawson Community First School has been named. The requirement for this change is a direct result of the increase in population following related new housing developments and therefore this capital funding approach is appropriate.

32. There are no legal or HR implications. Staff are already employed by the school delivering the provision through the Governor led setting.

## **Privacy and Public Health Impact and Equality and Diversity Implications**

33. A Joint Impact Assessment (JIA) screening was completed in respect of the change of age range proposal. The screening did not identify any potential concerns requiring further consideration during implementation (**Appendix 3**).

## Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Delegation of authority given by the Leader on 25 April 2018, endorsed by the Cabinet on 30 January 2020 [8. Cab 20200130 Change of age range-final.pdf \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)
- Appendix 2 – Consultation responses and review by the Governing Body
- Appendix 3 – Joint Impact Assessment Screening

## Contact Points

### County Council Contact Points

County Council: 01905 763763

### Specific Contact Points for this report

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## Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Interim Director of Children's Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

'Prescribed Alterations' regulations: *Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools: Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers October 2018*  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/756572/Maintained\\_schools\\_prescribed\\_alterations\\_guidance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/756572/Maintained_schools_prescribed_alterations_guidance.pdf)