

CABINET MEMBER DECISION

17 JUNE 2022

APPROVAL FOR PUBLIC NOTICE OF THE PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE AGE RANGE OF CROWN MEADOW FIRST SCHOOL AND NURSERY

Relevant Cabinet Member
Councillor Tracey Onslow

Relevant Officer
Director of Children's Services

Local Member
Councillor A Luckman

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 Crown Meadow First School and Nursery by one year group from 3-9 years to 2-9 years from 1 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 be 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 Crown Meadow First School and Nursery to the Local Authority to consider a change of age range at the school from 3-9 to 2-9 years.
3. Crown Meadow First School and Nursery currently offers 3-4-year-old early years provision as a maintained nursery. Under this proposal, the provision would be extended to support children from the age of two.
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). 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:

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

7. Crown Meadow First School and nursery received an Ofsted judgement of 'good' in a full inspection in June 2012. Ofsted have since visited the school twice, once in 2016 and once in November 2021. On both occasions the school was reconfirmed to be a 'good' school. The most recent Ofsted report following inspection in November 2021 made particular reference to the caring nature of the school, promoting 'values of empathy, diversity, curiosity, independent and resilience from when children start in Nursery. As a result, relationships between adults and pupils are respectful.' Moreover, the report emphasises that 'Children in Nursery get off to a good start' which 'prepares them well for the next stage of their education'.

- 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.*

8. The Governing Body of the school have been part of the decision-making process with a nursery sub-committee discussing and voting positively on the proposal to amend the age range of the school. Parent carers have been informed throughout the consideration of this proposal. A consultation period was held by the school between Monday 25 April 2022 and Friday 20 May 2022. 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.

9. 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. One response was received to the consultation which raised a number of concerns about the proposal. These concerns have been considered by the Governing Body of the school as well as by Officers before proposing this change. These concerns have been outlined below:

1. A concern was raised about the effectiveness and appropriateness of supporting two-year-olds within a school environment.

The quality of provision for two-year-olds in schools cannot be broadly described as inappropriate. There are many schools that deliver two-year-old provision successfully because they have a clearly defined and appropriate

pedagogical approach, strong leadership, a suitably resourced learning environment and skilled practitioners. The approach of the school to current early years education, as evidenced within recent Ofsted reports, provide confidence that the school have the ability to deliver an appropriate and effective early education environment for two-year-olds. Moreover, the provision of two-year-old places within maintained nursery schools, which are subject to full consultation and public notice to determine any changes, secures this provision for communities.

- II. A concern was also raised about the impact on the viability of other nurseries in the area already offering two-year-old provision which could result in the closure of providers.

The number of two-year-olds living within this area has shown a steady increasing trend over the last 15 years. Within the catchment area of Crown Meadow First School and Nursery, the average number of two-year-olds has increased from 54 per year in the 10 years from 2006-2015 to an average of 61 per year from 2016 to 2022. Moreover, since 2013 eligible families of two-year-old children in England are now entitled to 570 hours of free childcare per year, over no fewer than 38 weeks of the year, beginning in the term after their second birthday. As a result, the need to provide for and secure early education provision for two-year-olds is greater in this area now than historically experienced. Based on current demand we do not anticipate this change to have a significant detrimental impact on any other providers, but instead secure much needed additional provision for two-year-olds that is accessible and high quality for local families.

10. The Governing Body have considered this feedback and still consider it appropriate to propose this change.

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

11. Crown Meadow First School and Nursery have a Good Ofsted outcome which is explicit in the high quality of Nursery provision. Moreover, there are a number of staff at the school with significant early years experience including: the current Head of School Development who is an ex-Early Years Ofsted Inspector, LA Regulation and Inspection Officer for Under 8's; Early Years Lead; and a new Nursery Teacher will be starting alongside this change of provision in September 2022, who has been praised by Ofsted and the LA for quality of provision.

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

12. The school have demonstrated their plan to manage additional revenue costs. An existing room will be used with no overall increase to numbers and therefore there will not be any capital cost requirements whilst ensuring sufficient space for statutory space standards to be met. The school has a longer-term plan to apply for additional funds to enhance resource provision though this is not required to approve this change.

- 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.*

13. 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.*

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

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

15. This proposal will not impact on any other local schools. A concern was raised during the consultation to the possible detrimental impact on other local providers. This is considered in paragraphs 9 and 10 above. It is not expected that this proposal will have a significant detrimental impact on any other education providers.

- 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.*

16. Crown Meadow First School has a clear commitment to working with other early years providers including school nurseries in transition, mid-year changes and will continue to work with schools as children begin their reception year. This is part of an already established, clear transition arrangements.

- 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.*

17. Crown Meadow First School and Nursery is a rural school as defined by the DfE rural schools policy. This proposal will support in the sustainability of this school and therefore secure local school and early education provision for rural communities.

- 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.*

18. The school have outlined how they will continue to work with other early years settings to ensure any child who splits funding receives high quality Nursery provision. This includes working with the LA and private provisions to ensure moderation of data and to ensure children receive a balanced education.

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

19. Funding for staffing, marketing and the use of space has been secured. It is acknowledged that funding for resources must be further secured following approval to provide equipment suitable for two-year-olds. There are a range of funding options, and the school are committed to providing such equipment.

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

20. No such planning permission or other consent is required to undertake this change.

Recommendations

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

22. The Public Notice period is proposed to begin on 24 June 2022 and will end at noon on the 22 July 2022, following which, a final decision on the approval of this proposal will be made, taking into account any representations received during this period.

23. 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

24. There are no financial, legal or HR implications. Staffing has already been secured by the school to deliver the provision.

Privacy and Public Health Impact and Equality and Diversity Implications

25. 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 1**).

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Joint Impact Assessment Screening

Contact Points

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*](#)