

CABINET MEMBER DECISION

8 APRIL 2020

APPROVAL FOR PUBLIC NOTICE OF THE PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE AGE RANGE OF BEWDLEY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Relevant Cabinet Member

Mr M J Hart

Relevant Officer

Director of Children's Services

Local Member

Mr I Hardiman

Recommendation

1. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and ~~Skills~~ is recommended:

(a) to approve the publication of Public Notice of the proposal to alter the age range of Bewdley Primary School by one year group from 3-11 to 2-11 as per his delegated authority in relation to 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, Families and Communities will decide the proposals in respect of which no objection to the Public Notice or other proposal is received; and

(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 Bewdley Primary School to the Local Authority to consider a change of age range at the school from 3-11 to 2-11.

3. Bewdley Primary School currently offers 2-year-old provision as a Governor-led, non-maintained nursery. Under this proposal, the provision would become maintained along with the rest 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, Families and Communities and Cabinet Member with Responsibility 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 to 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*

The school has been judged as being 'Good' by Ofsted in May 2015 and reconfirmed during a short inspection in May 2019.

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*

The school has undertaken an appropriate and fair consultation which ran from 11th November to 9th December 2019 and has kept all stakeholders fully informed as the process has progressed. The school received 54 replies to the consultation, of which 49 were in favour of the proposal, 3 had no opinion, and 2 were undecided. There were no objections received to this proposal.

Two of the responses from close neighbours were in favour of the proposal but raised concerns regarding the traffic in Stourport Road. There should not be any extra traffic as we are not consulting on additional places, just the re-designation of the nursery from a non-maintained nursery to a maintained nursery. The school has confirmed they have contacted the respondents to confirm they will continue to address the issue of traffic around both Bewdley Primary School and The Bewdley School with regular reminders to parents about the availability of parking nearby, as well as taking part in meetings with local residents to actively seek a more permanent solution.

Another concern raised by a local resident was that current nursery staff should be guaranteed a job without loss of status or pay. As all Nursery staff are already employed by the school, their contracts will continue as they are so there will be no impact on current staffing.

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

Staff currently at the Governor-led nursery will be retained and therefore will continue to deliver the same 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*

The nursery will continue to be based in Riverside Children's Centre on the school site which has the facilities to provide nursery provision for this age range. Staff currently at the Governor-led nursery will be retained and therefore will continue to deliver the same quality of provision.

The school currently has systems in place which are able to support a broader age range. During the school consultation, many parents commented on the positive opportunities for improved communication, ability to book and pay for lunches using the ParentPay system for younger children, and the smooth transitions between different parts of the school facilitated by existing systems.

- 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*

This change has no impact on pathways for children.

- 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*

No admissions changes are required.

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

This change does not change the amount of nursery provision in the area and will not impact on any alternative 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*

Officers are satisfied that the school has made it clear that it can demonstrate intention to continue to work collaboratively with other local schools and providers. The school has an existing strong relationship with local childminders who also offer places to 2-year-olds.

- 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*

Bewdley Primary is not a small, rural school.

- 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*

The change will ensure the continued provision of 2-year-old nursery places in this area, supporting the best start in life for children.

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

No additional accommodation is required.

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

No planning permission is required.

m) Individual factors for specified school

No individual factors are to be considered.

Recommendations

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

8. The Public Notice period is proposed to begin on 20 April 2020 and will end at noon on the 18 May 2020, following which, a final decision on the approval of this proposal will be made, taking into account any representations received during this period.

9. 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 by and final decision made by the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills.

Legal, Financial and HR Implications

10. No funding is required to carry out this change as proposed.

11. There are no legal or HR implications.

Privacy and Public Health Impact and Equality and Diversity Implications

12. 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 2).

Supporting Information

- Appendix 1 – Delegation of authority given by the Leader on 25 April 2018, endorsed by the Cabinet on 30 January 2020
<https://worcestershire.moderngov.co.uk/mgChooseDocPack.aspx?ID=3165>
- Appendix 2 – Joint Impact Assessment

Contact Points

County Council Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the 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