

Portfolio Holder Decision

Change of Age Range at Exhall Cedars Infant School and St Matthew's Bloxham Church of England Primary School

Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Education & Learning
Date of decision	12 March 2021
	Signed

Decision taken

That the Portfolio Holder for Education and Learning agrees to the undertaking of a public consultation on changing the age range at Exhall Cedars Infant School and at St Matthew's Bloxham Church of England Primary School with effect from September 2021.

Reasons for decisions

Exhall Cedars:

1. Exhall Cedars Infant School currently has an age range of 3 – 11, admitting 3-year olds into a Nursery class. The school also operates a Pre-School for 2-4-year olds.
2. The school wishes to change its age range to become a 4 – 11 primary school, closing the Nursery class so that provision for younger children is available only at the Pre-School.
3. The Nursery class currently has an allocation of 52 half day places (26 morning + 26 afternoon places) which must be led by a qualified teacher and additional level 3 qualified early years professional. The cost of staffing is placing increasing financial pressure on the school while also not meeting the requirements of parents and carers. This impact has increased steadily over recent years as parent demand for more flexible sessions has increased.
4. The existing Pre-School is more popular with users as it offers places to a wider age range of children with more options for longer sessions. This is also due to eligible parents and carers now receiving funding for places for their 2-year olds and the extended entitlement for funding for 3 and 4 yr. olds.

5. The age range change will see no reduction in places for the community as the offer at the Pre-School will be increased to reflect those places previously offered by the Nursery class. The change will create one service that can be run to meet local need and demand with the ability to adapt and change in response to demand while being delivered in a more cost-efficient way.

St Matthew's Bloxham:

6. St Matthew's Bloxham Church of England Primary School currently has an age range of 3 – 11, admitting 3-year olds into a Nursery class.
7. The school wishes to change its age range to become a 4 – 11 primary school and replace the current Nursery class with a governor-run Pre-School.
8. The Nursery class currently has an allocation of 40 half day places (20 morning + 20 afternoon places) which must be led by a qualified teacher and additional level 3 qualified early years professional. The cost of staffing is placing increasing financial pressures on the school.
9. The school will replace the current Nursery class with a Pre-School offering 16 places initially. Delivery of early years places in this way is more cost efficient and can be adapted to meet demand (including the potential to take 2-year olds) in the future.
10. Within a 2-mile radius of the school there are 30 other nurseries/pre-schools that offer early education funding (EEF) for 2, 3- & 4-year olds, one of which opened in 2020. Of these local early years and childcare providers (including St Matthew's Bloxham) there are 16 x full day care settings and 15 x term time services.
11. Based on the current number of early years providers within this locality there continues to remain a sufficient number of places to meet need in the area.

Background information

1. Changes at national level have seen several alterations to the early years' offer in recent years, including
 - the introduction of funded places for disadvantaged 2-year olds
 - the increased universal entitlement for 3-year olds from 12.5 hours per week to 15 hours per week
 - the introduction of 30 hours funded childcare for working parents of 3-year olds.
2. This proposal recognises that many working parents require early years' places to be delivered in a much more flexible manner than the traditional nursery class can provide alongside creating a more financially viable delivery model that can adapt to meet differing demands in an efficient way.
3. Any proposed changes to the age range of a community school must be carried out in accordance with the Statutory Guidance issued by the Department for Education 'Making Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools.' The guidance requires the local authority to undertake a statutory consultation for a period of at least 4 weeks, with the proposals published both online and in a local newspaper, as well as to the governing body, the parents of registered pupils at the school, and anyone else considered appropriate.
4. The local authority should make its decision within 2 months of the end of the consultation period.
5. In addition to the consultation process, an Equality Impact Assessment is in place and will be reviewed before any final decision is made to go ahead with a change
6. In order to meet the time scales for this change to be implemented for September 2021, consultation needs to take place during April-May 2021.
7. The results of the consultation will be included in a future Cabinet report for approval, followed by implementation (if agreed) from September 2021.

Financial implications

None

Environmental implications

None

Report Author	Rosalind Currie rosalindcurrie@warwickshire.gov.uk,
Assistant Director	ianbudd@warwickshire.gov.uk
Lead Director	Strategic Director for Communities
Lead Member	Portfolio Holder for Education & Learning

Urgent matter?	<i>No</i>
Confidential or exempt?	<i>No</i>
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	<i>No</i>

List of background papers
None

Members and officers consulted and informed
<p>Portfolio Holder – Councillor Colin Hayfield</p> <p>Corporate Board –</p> <p>Legal –</p> <p>Finance –</p> <p>Equality –</p> <p>Democratic Services – Isabelle Moorhouse</p> <p>Councillors – Dahmash, P. Williams, Skinner, C. Davies and Chilvers</p> <p>Local Member(s): Councillor Bhagwant Singh Pandher</p> <p>Councillor Maggie O'Rourke</p>