

Cabinet

14 July 2022

Brownsover Community Infant School Change in Age Range

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approves changing the age range at Brownsover Community Infant School from 3 to 7 to 3 to 11 with effect from September 2026
2. Authorises applying to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator in relation to the proposed reduction in the school's Published Admission Number (PAN) from 60 to 30 from September 2023
3. Approves, subject to the approval of recommendation 1, that £0.965 million is added to the capital programme to deliver the scheme outlined in section 1, funded from Department for Education capital grant and developer funding.
4. Authorises, subject to the approval of recommendation 3, the Strategic Director for Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Education to invite tenders and enter into the appropriate contracts on terms and conditions considered acceptable to the Strategic Director for Resources, to make the necessary funding arrangements for these schemes.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 Information relating to how the Council plans for and anticipates the growth in demand for school places is laid out in the Education Sufficiency Strategy. One of the aims of this strategy is to support infant/junior reorganisation and amalgamation where feasible. When planning for school places, the Council needs to ensure that this is done in such a way to minimise the impact on school sustainability and enhance it where we can.
- 1.2 Brownsover Community Infant School currently has an age range of 3-7 and a PAN of 60. The total capacity of the school is 180 pupils.

- 1.3 It is proposed to extend the age range of Brownsover Community Infant School from 3-7 to 3-11 from September 2026. This would allow the School to change from a two form entry (2FE) infant school to a one form entry (1FE) primary school with the school offering year 3 places from September 2026. This would increase the school size by 30 pupil places from 180 places to 210 places.
- 1.4 The proposal looks to address long term sustainability for the school, address the infant/junior imbalance in places in the area and support the delivery of new provision on The Gateway development.
- 1.5 This proposal is intended to coincide with the opening of The Griffin School on The Gateway development (1300 homes) in September 2023, ensuring surplus capacity does not exceed manageable levels and therefore helping minimise the potential impact of the introduction of new provision into an area on existing provision. The new 1FE primary school received Cabinet approval in July 2015 and is the preferred option to meet the demand for pupil places from this development. Cohort numbers on The Gateway development are sufficient to sustain a 1FE primary school and therefore the introduction of new provision should not draw significant numbers of pupils from neighbouring areas. It will also provide reassurances to the DfE with regards to the opening of the Griffin School, thus securing the signing of the funding agreement to enable the new school to open.
- 1.6 There has been a decrease in birth cohort numbers in the local area in recent years which has resulted in reduced numbers on roll at both Brownsover Community Infant School and Boughton Leigh Infant School. This surplus capacity is expected to continue for the next 3 to 5 years and start to feed through into Boughton Leigh Junior School. With the reduced pupil numbers in the area, Brownsover Community Infant School is currently facing continued budgetary challenges as a 2FE infant School. The Council's financial modelling has demonstrated that in the medium to long term the school would be more financially sustainable as a 1FE primary school than a 2FE infant school.
- 1.7 Currently, Brownsover Community Infant School with a PAN of 60 and Boughton Leigh Infant School with a PAN of 90 feed into Boughton Leigh Junior School with a PAN of 120. In times of higher numbers on roll the shortfall of 30 places at Key Stage 2 has created sufficiency issues at year 3 with the requirement to provide additional places at a local school or the placement of children further afield. The alignment of Boughton Leigh Infant and Junior will also favour future amalgamation should the opportunity arise and possible further expansion if required as a result of further housing development in this area of Rugby.
- 1.8 It is proposed that following the first year 3 intake at Brownsover Community School in September 2026, Boughton Leigh Infant School and Boughton Leigh Junior School PANs will align with each other and the demand in the area. This would require a reduction in PAN at Boughton Leigh Junior School

from 120 to 90 over a 4 year period from September 2026 to September 2029, which would be subject to separate proposals.

- 1.9 It is anticipated that strategic housing approved in the area will start to build out and therefore start to increase pupil numbers in the local area beyond this 5 year period. The alignment of Boughton Leigh Infant and Junior Schools will facilitate any additional accommodation requirements that could arise as a result of the housing growth.
- 1.10 To support the proposals in this report in relation to Brownsover Community School, capital works are required to provide a Key Stage 2 learning environment and achieve the minimum classroom size guidelines and ancillary space. This additional classroom space will be achieved by the re-modelling of existing internal space. The estimated cost of the works is £0.965 million (includes a 10% contingency). It is proposed to fund this from £0.509 developer funding and £0.456 from education capital grant.
- 1.11 A 4 week statutory consultation on the proposals for Brownsover Community School was undertaken between 25th April 2022 and 23rd May 2022. A total of 78 responses were received. Of the responses received, 60% were in agreement with the proposal, and 40% disagreed with the proposal.
- 1.12 An overview of feedback received during the consultation period is available at Appendix 1.
- 1.13 In terms of the responses in agreement with the proposal, the majority were in favour of the increase in parental choice for primary provision and the benefit to children of the continuity in their education of being able to stay in one education setting for their primary years.
- 1.14 In relation to the responses not in agreement with the proposal, these included the site size being too small to be a primary school and the impact of the proposal on Boughton Leigh Junior School.
- 1.15 The site area is restricted for a typical primary school. Where this is the case there will usually need to be more of a flexible approach to the site area and the management of this. The site does not have a playing field and the school will need to look at what opportunities there are to utilise offsite facilities on occasions. However, the school has generous amounts of hard play/social provision, and this, along with the school hall, can be utilised for PE. The Key Stage 2 classroom space can be achieved within the school through the re-modelling of existing internal space.
- 1.16 It should be noted that Boughton Leigh Junior School have expressed their reservations regarding the proposal particularly in relation to the planned reduction in pupil numbers and the wider implications for funding and staffing levels and the wider curriculum offer. The proposal would eventually require Boughton Leigh Junior School to reduce their PAN by a form of entry (120 to 90) to align with Boughton Leigh Infant School. The age range extension at Brownsover Community School would be completed over the next 7 years.

This would give the junior school a time frame in which to plan and respond to staffing changes to minimise the impact on the school when the reduced PAN is planned to be introduced, subject to further appropriate proposals and consultation.

- 1.17 The Council acknowledge the concerns raised through the consultation and by Boughton Leigh Junior School. However, if the proposal was not to go ahead, the introduction of the new primary school on The Gateway together with low cohort numbers is likely to result in a continued decline in pupil numbers in some schools and subsequent reductions in PAN. With this proposal the Council are looking to reorganise education provision as a result of the changing location, spread and demand for pupil places in the North of Rugby and strategically plan for future growth whilst also addressing issues of school sustainability and incorporating the formation of all through primary provision and the additional benefits this can offer to pupils and a school.

2. Financial Implications

- 2.1 The total estimated cost of the capital works proposed are £0.965 million. It is proposed to fund this from £0.509 developer funding and £0.456 from education capital grant.

3. Environmental Implications

- 3.1 The opening of The Griffin School on The Gateway Development and the age range at Brownsover Community School will promote sustainable travel from home to school and reduce travel time and distance for some families.
- 3.2 Any additional use of offsite provision for PE on occasion may require the use of transport

4. Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

- 4.1 Should a decision be made to expand the age range of the school then authority from the Office of the Schools Adjudicator will be sought by Warwickshire County Council officers for a variation in the published admissions number for the 2023/24 academic year, and a proposal will also be brought forward to alter the school's published admission number permanently from the 2024/25 academic year onwards, subject to further consultation.

Appendices

1. Appendix 1 – Summary of consultation responses

Background Papers

None

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The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s): Cllr Simpson-Vince

Other members: Cllr Peter Butlin