

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE

16 February 2021

LOWERING THE AGE RANGE OF STILLINGTON COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To provide Executive Members with information upon which to make a decision on proposals published by North Yorkshire County Council to change the age range of Stillington Community Primary School from 4-11 to age 3-11 with effect from 23 February 2021.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 The Governing Body of Stillington CP School has asked the Local Authority to propose lowering of the age range of their school from 4-11 to 3-11 in order to offer nursery education for three year old children.

2.2 The Governing Body of Stillington CP School consulted with parents and the local community on their proposal from 21 September to 26 October 2020.

2.3 The Executive met on 24 November 2020 and considered the outcome of the governors' consultation. They agreed to publish statutory proposals on 11 January giving 4 weeks until 8 February for representations to be made. At the time of writing this report there have been no objections or responses to the statutory notice.

2.4 The Executive agreed a model for making decisions on school organisation proposals on 25 September 2007. Under this model, school organisation decisions, for which the decision-maker is the Local Authority, will be taken by the County Council's Executive, or if there are no objections to the statutory notice, the decision is delegated to the Executive Members for Education and Skills and for Children's Services.

2.5 If at close of business on Monday 8 February 2021 there have been no objections to this proposal the matter will be determined by the Executive Member for Education and Skills at his meeting with the Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Service on Tuesday 16 February 2021.

2.6 This report is supported by a number of appendices as listed below:

Appendix 1: Statutory Notice

Appendix 2: Statutory Proposal

Appendix 3: Consultation document and consultation responses

Appendix 4: School Organisation Guidance for Decision Makers

Appendix 5: Equality Impact Assessment

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 All three and four year old children are entitled to 15 hours of government funding known as Universal Funding per week for 38 weeks per year to access Early Years Foundation Stage education and childcare. This will be from the beginning of the school term following their third birthday until compulsory school age or until they take up a place in a Reception class. From September 2017, eligible working families have been able to access up to an additional 15 hours of government funding known as Extended Entitlement to access the equivalent of 30 hours of government funded childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year. A government funded place can be taken in a maintained school nursery and Foundation Stage class and/or in an Ofsted registered private or voluntary sector provision. It is parental choice as to which type of provision is most appropriate for their child and most convenient for individual circumstances.
- 3.2 Stillington CP School currently provides education for children from 4-11 years. There is no nursery provision within the village and Governors have been aware for some time that some of their children do not access nursery education.
- 3.3 Following an inadequate judgement by OFSTED in 2017 Stillington CP School was issued with a directive academy order by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC). Despite engagement with academy trusts, an academy sponsor could not be found. Although Stillington CP was judged inadequate by Ofsted again in January 2019, Ofsted undertook a special measures monitoring inspection in February 2020 which found that “leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of special measures”. Significant LA support for school improvement has included additional adviser time for English, Maths, SEN, Early Years and governance. In March 2020 the RSC wrote to the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service saying that, while the RSC cannot either revoke an academy order or endorse a federation proposal, NYCC “should pursue the proposal it finds best for the school at the current time”. This led to a collaboration with the Foston and Terrington federation, which involved structural re-organisation/ reduction in staffing, including a shared headship across the collaboration. The collaboration’s ‘strategic growth plan’ proposes to extend Stillington’s age range from 4-11 to 3-11. The headteacher has done this successfully and viably at both Foston and Terrington with a positive impact on the attainment and progress of those children.

4.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1 The proposal is to provide places for 3 - 4 year olds as an extension of current reception class provision, by the creation of a Foundation Stage Class from 23 February 2021. The Foundation Stage Class would be very similar to what is available for the existing children in school. The 3 - 4 year olds would be taught in the indoor and outdoor areas currently used by the Reception and KS1 children, which is equipped to provide a high-quality learning environment. The Foundation Stage Class would have a qualified teacher to support the learning and development and for staff with a good understanding of the Reception curriculum, nursery education is not a completely new area to understand.

4.2 Stillington CP School is proposing to offer up to 10 full time (or equivalent part-time) nursery-aged places. This would be arranged flexibly depending upon the needs of the family and current legislation, including provision over lunchtime although there will be an additional charge if a school dinner is provided.

4.3 Priority for admission of nursery-aged children will be determined by the County Council's Admissions Policy for Nurseries. Admissions for the nursery-aged children are separate from admissions to the school, which are determined by the County Council's policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools.

5.0 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN AND ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

5.1 From 21 September to 16 October 2020 the Governing Body of Stillington Community Primary School consulted the local community on their proposal. The consultation document, which is appended to this report, was sent out to parents, local stakeholders, and other Early Years providers. The consultation document and the responses to the consultation are included in Appendix 3.

5.2 The Executive met on 24 November 2020, considered the consultation responses, and resolved to proceed with publication of the statutory proposals.

6.0 STATUTORY PROPOSALS AND NOTICES

6.1 The Statutory Notice was published on 11 January and a representation period of 4 weeks has been observed. A copy of the Statutory Notice is enclosed as Appendix 1 of this report. A copy of the complete proposal, including all the information required in the school organisation regulations and guidance, was published on the County Council's website. A copy of the proposal is attached as Appendix 2.

6.2 At the time of writing this report there have been no objections received to this Statutory Notice, with the end of the representation period due on Monday 8 February. If any objections are received they will be verbally reported to the Executive on 16 February.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 School revenue funding

Following their staffing restructure as part of their collaboration with Foston CE (Voluntary Controlled) and Terrington CE (Voluntary Aided) schools, Stillington's revenue forecast has improved to a projected surplus of £15,000 in 2020/21. A revenue surplus is also projected for 2021/22, with a small deficit (£1,700) forecast in 2022/23. The Governing Body and the Headteacher have modelled the potential income and costs of running nursery-aged provision and feel that this is financially viable. They have also discussed the financial implications of temporary closure of the school during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

7.2 Capital Implications

The overall learning environment and space available meets the requirements of the Foundation Stage Class. Over the summer the school refurbished this area

from their devolved capital, which facilitated an improved learning environment for current KS1 children and the proposed Foundation Stage Class. The school is currently reviewing provision and resources for the outdoor area, and considering ways in which younger children can access appropriate equipment and resources independently. This may lead to some further minor capital works which the school would fund from their Devolved Capital.

7.3 Transport costs

There are no transport costs related to this proposal.

8.0 REGULATIONS AND GUIDANCE

8.1 The consideration and determination of school organisation proposals by the Local Authority is set out in regulations and in guidance produced by the Department for Education. Careful regard has been had to these provisions.

PRELIMINARY CHECKS

8.2 The guidance requires that the Decision Maker must consider, on receipt of each proposal, whether any information is missing; whether the published notice of the proposal complies with statutory requirements; whether the statutory consultation has been carried out prior to the publication of the notice; and whether the proposal is related to other published proposals.

Having undertaken an audit of these preliminary checks, the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Democratic Services) advises that:

- all information required has been supplied;
- the published notice complies with statutory requirements;
- statutory consultation has been carried out prior to publication of the notice;
- and that the preliminary points for consideration have been dealt with sufficiently to permit the Executive to proceed to determine this proposal.

TYPES OF DECISION THAT CAN BE MADE

8.3 In considering proposals for making changes to school provision, the Executive, as Decision Maker can decide to:

- reject the proposals;
- approve the proposals;
- approve the proposals with a modification;
- approve the proposals subject to them meeting a specific condition (these conditions are set out in paragraph 8 of Schedule 3 to the Prescribed Alterations Regulations, and are not considered applicable to this proposal).

9.0 PROCEDURE FOR THE MEETING

9.1 The Executive agreed on 25 September 2007 that in making a decision on school organisation proposals:

(a) The Executive must have regard to decision makers guidance published by the DfE and to the Executive Procedure Rules laid down in the North Yorkshire County Council Constitution.

(b) All decisions must give reasons for the decision, indicating the main factors/criteria for the decision.

10.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

EDUCATION STANDARDS

10.1 Following LA support for school improvement and consultation with the RSC, Stillington's formal collaboration with Foston and Terrington includes a shared headship. A review of improvements in standards was recently undertaken by the Principal Adviser and the Senior Early Years Adviser. Their review during November found that overall, there has been strong progress made at the school since the monitoring inspection in February 2020. Leadership is strengthened, with a balanced and well-sequenced curriculum now in place. Expectations have been raised. There is also a growing evidence base to support leaders' views that the school is no longer inadequate. The advisers are confident in the capacity of leadership, including governance, to drive through continued improvements so that Stillington becomes a securely good school.

VIEWS OF INTERESTED PARTIES

10.2 45 written responses to the consultation had been received. 43 respondents, including the Diocesan Director of Education, wrote in support of the proposal. Two objections were received from the same nursery setting in Easingwold. However, there are no childminders or other early years provision based in Stillington. There is provision in Easingwold but this involves travelling. The location of Stillington means that, without early years provision in the village, parents would need to drive. The infrequent bus service through Stillington means families who do not have access to a car would be limited about how they were able to access early years provision. The governing body met (virtually) on 28 October and unanimously voted to proceed with the nursery proposal.

11.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no Human Rights issues in relation to this decision.

12.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

12.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in respect of this change and is attached at Appendix 5. This includes an assessment of the potential impact of the proposals on rural communities.

13.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 Having undertaken the required preliminary checks, that Executive Members resolve that:

- (a) The four key issues listed above in paragraph 8.2 have been satisfied and there can be a determination of the proposals.
- (b) The age range of Stillington Community Primary School be lowered to age 3-11 with effect from 23 February 2021.

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Report prepared by Mark Ashton – Strategic Planning Officer

Appendices

Appendix 1: Statutory Notice

Appendix 2: Statutory Proposal

Appendix 3: Consultation Document & consultation responses

Appendix 4: School Organisation Guidance for Decision Makers

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Background documents

Report to Executive, 24 November 2020