

Report of Director of Children's Services

Report to Executive Board

Date: 27th July 2016

**Subject: Outcome of consultation to increase learning places at
Hunslet St Mary's Church of England Primary School**



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): City and Hunslet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Summary of main issues

This report contains details of a proposal brought forward to meet the Local Authority's duty to ensure sufficiency of school places. The changes that are proposed form prescribed alterations under the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and accompanying statutory guidance set out the process which must be followed when making such changes. The statutory process to make these changes varies according to the nature of the change and the status of the school and the process followed in respect of the proposal is detailed in this report. The decision maker in these cases remains the Local Authority.

Detailed analysis of available demographic data has been carried out to establish whether the existing amount of primary school provision in Hunslet is likely to meet expected future demand. This analysis has drawn attention to a need for additional school places and discussions have since followed with the following schools located within the area of need: St Mary's C of E, Low Road, Hunslet Carr, and St Joseph's Catholic Primary Schools. A preferred option to permanently expand Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School was agreed through these discussions as a scheme able to adequately address the additional need for school places. Therefore, public consultation on a proposal to expand Hunslet St Mary's School was conducted from 25th April until 20th May 2016.

Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to:

1. Approve the publication of a Statutory Notice to expand Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School from a capacity of 210 pupils to 315 pupils with an increase in the admission number from 30 to 45 with effect from September 2017.
2. Note the responsible officer for implementation is the Head of Service Learning Systems.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report contains details of a proposal brought forward to meet the local authority's duty to ensure sufficiency of school places, and which supports the achievement of the Best Council priorities to improve educational achievement and close achievement gaps. The report seeks permission to publish a statutory notice in respect of this proposal.

2 Background information

- 2.1 The available demographic data has identified a need for additional school places in the Hunslet area to meet demand from families living locally. This is due to a continuous rise in the number of 0-5 year olds residing in this area of Leeds; the interaction with schools across the Hunslet, Belle Isle and Holbeck planning areas; and an extensive programme of house building both planned and already underway in the Hunslet area. There is a particular pressure for places in the area where Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School is situated. Schools across the Hunslet area are full and unable to accommodate any additional demand.
- 2.2 A scheme to expand Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School from 30 places up to 45 places in reception from September 2017 can be achieved within the school's existing boundary; however, although not a prerequisite for the expansion to proceed, the proposal also broadens its scope to include a possible change in status of an area of public open space, adjacent to the school. This would improve the schools current safeguarding arrangements and provide additional outdoor play space. A separate but related consultation process will be undertaken in regard to any proposed change of use of this public open space.
- 2.3 The governing body at Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School have recognised that there is increased demand for school places locally and are supportive of plans to expand the school to help address this sufficiency issue.
- 2.4 There is potential to increase some childcare provision (Breakfast and after school clubs) at Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School to assist in meeting additional demand identified by Early Years officers. The possible expansion of these services is supported by the school's leadership and any required changes will be demand led.
- 2.5 Consultation on this option took place from 25th April to 20th May 2016. This included use of the WordPress online forum and three drop in sessions. The drop in sessions offered an opportunity to discuss the proposal with Leeds City Council representatives and to complete a consultation response form. Drop-in sessions were attended by parents, local residents and other interested stakeholders. An online Talking Point survey was also available during the consultation period, offering another method by which to express support or raise objections to the proposal. Information regarding the consultation was distributed widely to parents, local residents and other interested parties by Hunslet St Mary's School, through Early Years providers, via websites and social media, and by local community groups. A number of banners were also placed at the school site to advertise the consultation and leaflets advertising the consultation activity were distributed to

local residents. Consultation meetings were also held with the governors, staff and school council of Hunslet St Mary's School.

3 Main issues

3.1 The expansion of Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School is proposed as it is a good school in an area of high demographic need. The school has agreed to take a temporary additional cohort of fifteen children for 2016 to meet the growing need for primary school places in the area, and the school's governing body and the diocese both fully support a proposal for permanent expansion from 2017.

3.2 During the consultation period there were twenty five written responses received and one response submitted via Talking Point. Twenty four respondents supported the proposal to increase the number of school places, one respondent neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposal and one respondent disagreed with the proposal. A summary of comments made and any concerns raised follows. A copy of the responses received can be requested from the Sufficiency and Participation Team at educ.school.organisation@leeds.gov.uk.

3.3 Those respondents in support of the proposal commented that providing more school places at St Mary's would be helpful in an area where it is becoming more difficult to get into a school close to home. Others commented that change is good and a larger playground would be great for the pupils. Some respondents commented that smaller reception classes and split classes could be more beneficial for children's learning.

3.4 Concerns raised by respondents are listed as follows;

3.4.1 **Concern:** Concern raised that class sizes would be larger, impacting on teaching standards and negatively affecting the educational achievement of future pupils at the school.

Response: The school would ensure that staffing increases in line with the increase in pupil numbers. This would ensure that the current ratio of one teacher to every thirty children is maintained - as prescribed by current class size legislation – and reception class sizes would actually become smaller than at present. The head teacher and governing body are keen to retain the ethos and existing high standards of the school and are confident that the proposed change can be successfully managed without detriment to the education of current and future pupils. Support could also be provided on request by the Learning Improvement Team at Leeds City Council to assist them in managing the process.

3.4.2 **Concern:** Concern that the decision to increase school places at St Mary's School has been rushed through without sufficient consultation or consideration of all the possible options to address the need for school places in the area.

3.4.3 **Response:** The consultation process has been carried out following Department for Education consultation principles and in line with all current legislation and guidance.

A full process of stakeholder engagement involving local schools, diocesan representatives, ward members, and local authority officers from Highways, Learning Improvement, Built Environment, Planning, and Sufficiency and Participation has taken place to identify and agree this proposal as one which best meets the identified need.

- 3.4.4 **Concern:** Concern that space in the school will become crowded and facilities such as the hall, playground and car park would be unable to cope with more staff, parents and children.

Response: New classrooms and facilities, i.e. toilets and cloakrooms, will be built to accommodate the extra classes of children. All internal facilities (classrooms, toilets, cloakrooms etc.) would need to conform to minimum building regulations and standards and, therefore, would be appropriately sized and fit for purpose. Externally, additional playground space will be provided and made available from September 2017, extra drop off/pick up entrances to the site could be created and additional car parking for staff would need to be constructed should the proposal go ahead. In addition, school staff would ensure that the operational running of the school is adapted to prevent issues such as overcrowding. This may be achieved by implementation of phased lunch and break times across year groups/key stages. If required, additional staffing resources would be provided by the school to ensure that adequate supervision of children during break times is maintained.

- 3.4.5 **Concern:** Concern that the proposal does not contain plans for new purpose built provision for children with special educational needs, and that this will reduce accessibility to some children who require additional support.

Response: Unfortunately, following assessment by the Built Environment team, the inclusion of any additional SEN provision within this proposal would not be possible due to the constrained nature of the site. The Sufficiency and Participation and Complex Needs teams work closely together in order to identify where a proposed expansion of a school could include new resourced SEN provision and it is hoped that future proposals in this area of Leeds may be able to include such an element.

- 3.4.6 **Concern:** Concerned that existing green space will be lost if an extension block is constructed across a part of the school garden area.

Response: An accommodation solution has not yet been fully determined and a detailed design for the new building would need to be developed. Any accommodation requirements would be agreed in consultation with the school leadership team and governing body as part of the expansion process. If the proposal goes ahead, it has been shown to be possible to incorporate new playground space into early design plans which would help to offset any loss of school garden space. In addition, a separate consultation process to change the status of some public open space may result in the school having access to an increased amount of secure green space which could be used to replace any lost garden areas. The school also has existing use of a large area of public open green space for physical education and games activities.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

- 4.1.1 The process in respect of all the proposals has been managed in accordance with the relevant legislation and with local good practice.
- 4.1.2 The consultation carried out included a four week period of on-line consultation on the preferred option, supported by the use of the council's Talking Point survey system. A number of drop in sessions for parents/carers, residents and other stakeholders also took place at Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School.
- 4.1.3 The drop in sessions were information sharing events that provided an opportunity for parents/carers, residents and other stakeholders to ask questions. Officers from Highways supported officers from Children's Services at these sessions. The drop in sessions were held at the beginning and end of the school day to talk to parents before and after they dropped off and picked up their children. A drop in was also held during the school's parent's consultation day.
- 4.1.4 Information sharing 'Q&A style' meetings were also held with the school council, staff and governing body of the school.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

- 4.2.1 The EDCI screening form has been completed and is attached as an appendix to this Executive Board report.

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 This proposal is being brought forward to meet the Council's statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for all children in Leeds. Providing places close to where children live allows improved accessibility to local school places, helping to support good levels of primary school attendance.
- 4.3.2 This proposal offers good value for money through its capacity to support achievement of the Best Council' outcome to give everyone the chance to do well at every level of learning, gaining the skills they need for life.
- 4.3.3 This proposal provides tangible support for the city's aspiration to be the Best Council, the best city in which to grow up and a Child Friendly City. The delivery of pupil places through the Learning Places Programme is one of the baseline entitlements of a Child Friendly City and by creating good quality local places we also offer strong support towards achievement of the aim to improve educational achievement and the closure of achievement gaps. In turn, this proposal provides underlying support for the Council's ambition to produce a strong economy by compassionate means. A good quality school place also contributes to the achievement of targets within the Children and Young People's Plan, such as our obsession to improve behaviour, attendance and achievement. It is, therefore, important that when bringing any proposal forward, there is a degree of certainty that any change would not have a negative impact on the teaching and learning in the school. Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School was rated 'Good' by Ofsted at its most recent inspection.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 An indicative budget for the proposed Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School expansion project is estimated at £1.6 million based on a high-level calculation that considers the amount of new build, external/internal works and associated fees. Once the feasibility stage is complete and moves towards the detailed design phase, the budget will be realigned to reflect the design freeze or pre-tender estimate which will take account of site investigations and survey information.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

- 4.5.1 The processes that have been and will be followed are in accordance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 as set out in the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007, and amended by School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
- 4.5.2 This report is subject to call in

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 The proposal to increase primary provision in the Hunslet area has been brought forward in time to allow places to be delivered for 2017.
- 4.6.2 A decision not to proceed at this stage would mean fresh consultation on new proposals, and would mean places may not be delivered in time. The authority's ability to meet its statutory duty for sufficiency of school places in the short term may also be at risk.
- 4.6.3 There is a corporate risk associated with failing to provide sufficient school places in good quality buildings that meet the needs of local communities.

5 Conclusions

- 5.1 Our ambition is to be the best city in the country. As a vibrant and successful city we will attract new families to Leeds, and making sure that we have enough school places for all children is one of our top priorities. This proposal has been brought forward to meet that need and, following the appropriate consultation, we now seek to move to the Statutory Notice stage. This proposal would help to ensure that all children in Leeds have the best possible start to their learning, and to deliver our vision of Leeds as a Child Friendly City.
- 5.2 The majority of the responses received during the consultation period support the proposal for expansion of Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School. Concerns raised during consultation have been considered, and on balance, the proposal remains strong and addresses the need for school places in the area.
- 5.3 The additional places are required for September 2017 to ensure the authority continues to meet its legal requirement to ensure sufficiency of primary provision.

There is evidence of local need for places in the area and it is, therefore, recommended that the proposal be approved.

6 Recommendations

6.1 Executive Board is asked to:

Approve the publication of a Statutory Notice to expand Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School from a capacity of 210 pupils to 315 pupils with an increase in the admission number from 30 to 45 with effect from September 2017.

Note the responsible officer for implementation is the Head of Service Learning Systems.

7 Background documents¹

7.1 None

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.