

Report of Director of Children and Families

Report to Executive Board

Date: 17 April 2019

Subject: Outcome of consultation to increase learning places at Micklefield Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s): Kippax and Methley	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" 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 a 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 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 (LA).

A consultation on a proposal to permanently expand Micklefield Church of England (C of E) Primary School (PS) from 20 to 30 places in each year group was held between 28 January 2019 and 4 March 2019.

A total of 20 consultation responses were received of which 16 either strongly supported or somewhat supported the proposal, three neither supported nor opposed and one strongly or somewhat opposed the proposal. Further details about the responses and issues identified by stakeholders and respondents during the consultation period are detailed in the main body of this report.

This report summarises the consultation responses and seeks approval from Executive Board on the recommendations below.

Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to:

- Approve the publication of a Statutory Notice on a proposal to permanently expand primary provision at Micklefield Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School from a capacity of 140 pupils to 210 pupils with an increase in the admission number from 20 to 30 with effect from September 2021;
- Note that the proposed expansion of primary provision is subject to feasibility and planning permission as indicated at 4.4.1 of this report and that the proposal has been brought forward in time for places to be delivered for 2021; and
- Note the responsible officer for implementation is the Head of Learning Systems.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 This report contains details of a proposal brought forward to meet the LA's duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places, which supports the achievement of the Best Council priority to improve educational achievement and close achievement gaps. This report describes the outcome of the consultation regarding a proposal to permanently expand primary provision at Micklefield C of E PS and seeks permission to publish a statutory notice under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and in accordance with the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and associated statutory guidance in respect of this proposal.

2 Background information

- 2.1 During recent years Leeds City Council has increased the number of primary places city-wide in order to respond to the rising birth rate and numbers of children due to start school. Micklefield village sits within an area of the city where the birth rate has remained fairly static however new housing developments in Micklefield village are expected to increase the need for additional primary school places in the coming years. There are currently two housing developments with full planning permission for around 340 homes and plans for further housing which may be built in the future. It is likely to take several years for the housing to be built and based on the anticipated build rates and pupil yields, along with the historical take up of places at Micklefield C of E PS compared with the numbers of children accessing Garforth primary schools, we believe that up to 10 additional places will be needed in each year group.
- 2.2 Discussions about an increase to places have been held with the Governing Body and although there have been delays bringing forward the new housing due to planning and other issues, we believe that it is now the right time to seek permission to permanently expand the school to ensure that the LA continues to meet its statutory duty to provide sufficient places.
- 2.3 Consultation on this proposal took place between 28 January and 4 March 2019 to seek the views of parents, local residents and other stakeholders.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 New housing developments in Micklefield are expected to result in an increased demand for additional primary school places. Although Micklefield has good transport links including a railway station, it has only one primary school accessible by foot. The expansion of Micklefield C of E PS would ensure that families could access a local school place within a reasonable walking distance.
- 3.2 Micklefield C of E PS is currently rated 'Requires Improvement' by Ofsted. The school is working closely with the LA which is supporting the new Headteacher and Governing Body with its improvement plans. If this proposal were to progress, the school would be able to admit additional children gradually, growing year on year from September 2021 which would enable the school to continue to focus on its improvement journey in a managed way. The school currently has split age

classes but the expansion would allow the school to introduce classes in single age groups which is expected to have a positive impact on teaching and learning.

3.3 Because there are no other schools within a reasonable distance, no other school expansions have been considered. If we do nothing and leave the admission limit at 20 it is likely that in future years there will be insufficient places available.

3.4 During the consultation period we received 20 on-line and email consultation responses. 16 respondents (80%) either strongly or somewhat supported the proposal, one respondent (5%) either strongly or somewhat opposed, and three (15%) neither supported nor opposed the proposal.

3.5 During the consultation pupils from the school council met with council officers to talk about the proposals and ask questions. Of the 8 responses received, 7 pupils were in favour and one was unsure. Some of the comments from those in favour stated that if there are going to be more children, more school places will be needed; that there would be more children to make friends with especially at play times; it would be good to have more teachers and more dinner ladies would be needed; that people wouldn't have to drive as far or could walk to school but if the school wasn't big enough people might have to travel further; that children would have classes just for their year group. The response from the pupil who was unsure expressed that people buying the new houses may be a different religion and so might not want to go to the school; other children might not like the school getting bigger so they may leave the school; there might be bullying and more fighting.

3.6 A copy of the responses received can be requested from the Capacity Planning and Sufficiency Team at educ.school.organisation@leeds.gov.uk

3.7 **A summary of the comments in support of the proposal are below:**

- Additional places are needed due to the housing. Leeds City Council is thinking ahead and planning for increased numbers;
- Expansion of the school would allow people moving into the village to attend their local village school;
- Expansion of the school would prevent extra pressure on Garforth schools;
- Expanding the school would reduce traffic out of the village as families wouldn't need to travel to take their children to school;
- It is better to expand existing schools than build new ones;
- The expansion is positive for the future of the school;
- The school is at the heart of the village and increasing numbers should help improve school performance;
- The consultation process was useful with the Leeds team engaging throughout;

- Leeds City Council officers were very helpful and encouraging and it was good to have the school and council officers in one room at the drop-ins.

3.8 **A summary of the concerns raised about the proposal with a response to those concerns are below:**

- 3.8.1 Concerns: That building work would have a negative effect on pupils, impact on play space, disrupt learning and that dependant on its location on the school site, smells from the new kitchen would impact on local residents.

Response: If the proposals progressed, any designs for the additional accommodation needed would be drawn up in full consultation with the school based on guidance from the Education and Skills Funding Agency which sets out the requirements for classroom sizes, play space etc. We would consult with colleagues in planning as one of their roles is to review the proximity of any proposed school expansion in relation to surrounding properties to take into account impact on residents. The expansion of the school would involve some building work and wherever possible would be carried out in school holidays or out of hours and delivery times would be managed to avoid conflict at the beginning and end of the school day. We would seek to ensure that the work is phased to minimise the impact on both pupils, staff and local residents. Any building work carried out while the school is open would be completely segregated from the pupils and staff to ensure safety.

- 3.8.2 Concerns: That school management won't be able to manage child welfare and bullying, that teachers won't be able to manage bigger classes, that the expansion will impact on the school as a close knit family as children learn better in small classes, and that as the school is 'requires improvement' it should be focusing on getting better outcomes for existing students before admitting additional ones.

Response: The school is working closely with the LA which is supporting the new Headteacher and Governing Body with its improvement plans. If this proposal were to progress, the school would be able to admit additional children gradually, growing year on year from September 2021 which would enable the school to continue to focus on its improvement journey in a managed way. The school currently has split age classes, some of which have up to 30 children in them. The expansion would allow the school to introduce classes in single age groups which is expected to have a positive impact on teaching and learning. Child welfare and safety is the school's highest priority and any concerns raised by parents will always be managed appropriately by the Headteacher and Governing Body.

- 3.8.3 Concerns: That increases in school numbers would result in more families driving to school resulting in further parking issues for residents on Great North Road and around Oldfield Close. General concern about increases in traffic, whether there is enough parking for parents and concerns around safety of children.

Response: At both the consultation drop-ins and in the consultation responses some residents raised concern around existing parking issues. If the expansion were to progress a full traffic assessment and a transport statement, based on the results of surveys commissioned for this project, would be produced to reflect and support the planning application process. This would include an assessment of

current highways issues and modelling what the impact would be of additional traffic in the area. LCC encourages sustainable travel and although it is expected that the majority of children would walk to school any planning application would need to demonstrate how any issues resulting from an increase in traffic could be mitigated.

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 was carried out over the five week period 28 January 2019 to 4 March 2019 to take account of the half term holiday in February and included use of an on-line consultation survey. To ensure maximum engagement with families we asked the school to promote the consultation on the proposal via the school website and a consultation leaflet was sent to parents/carers via book bags. A consultation leaflet highlighting the reasons for the consultation and the timings of the consultation drop-in meetings was distributed to residents living closest to the school. Community drop-in sessions were held at the school at different times of the day including an evening meeting, supported by officers from Highways, Sufficiency and Participation, and the City Development Teams. Residents and parents/carers attended to discuss the proposals and find out more. Information was distributed widely, including to parents and carers via the school website, to other local schools, via local Early Years providers, on the Leeds City Council website, the Family Information Service website, Twitter and Facebook. Facebook posts highlighting the consultation were made on the 'Friends of Micklefield PS' page and shared via the 'Micklefield Community' page. Posters advertising the consultation were displayed in the local community. Meetings were held with the governors, staff and school council. The consultation was also shared with the Leeds and York Dioceses, parish councillors, the MP and staff unions.

4.1.3 Local ward members are supportive of the proposals and the Governing Body strongly supports the proposal, welcoming the opportunity to offer a school place within the village as it grows.

4.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 The EDCI screening form for the proposal is attached as an appendix to this report.

4.3 Council policies and Best Council Plan

4.3.1 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.

4.3.2 This proposal is being brought forward to meet the LA's statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for all the children in Leeds. Providing places close to where children live allows improved accessibility to local and

desirable school places, is an efficient use of resources and reduces the risk of non-attendance.

4.3.3 This proposal contributes to 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. By creating good quality local school places we can support the priority aim of improving educational achievement and closing achievement gaps. In turn, by providing young people with the skills they need for life, 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 towards delivery of targets within the Children and Young People's Plan such as our obsession to improve behaviour, attendance and achievement.

4.3.4 It is important when bringing any proposals forward that there is a degree of certainty that any change would not have a negative impact on teaching and learning. The Headteacher and Governing Body are confident that they can manage the expansion of the school which would happen gradually from September 2021 whilst continuing to focus on improving outcomes for both existing and future children attending the school. Colleagues in Leeds City Council's Learning Improvement team are supportive of the expansion, especially since the move towards single age classes is likely to have a positive impact on teaching and learning.

4.4 **Resources and value for money**

4.4.1 Based on current basic need funding rates for cost per pupil places, the target cost of the proposed scheme is in the region of £1.75m. This may not represent the final total cost of the scheme as once the feasibility stage was complete and schemes proceeded to the detailed design phase, budgets would be realigned to reflect that all parties have agreed the final design and cost estimates. This would take account of site investigations and survey information, any 'abnormal' costs, off-site works and fees in accordance with standard project and risk management principles. The proposed scheme would be subject to planning permission which would need to be granted prior to the commencement of construction works and would be subject to relevant stakeholder consultation.

4.4.2 The proposed scheme would be funded from the Learning Places Programme. Funding streams would be primarily through Basic Need Grant, council borrowing, and Community Infrastructure Levy. The precise funding packages would be confirmed at the design freeze stage, and detailed in the relevant Design and Cost reports.

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 2013.

4.5.2 This report is subject to call in.

4.6 Risk Management

- 4.6.1 These proposals have been brought forward in time to allow primary places to be delivered for September 2021. A decision not to proceed at this stage may result in places not being available in time for when the new housing begins to be built. It may also result in bulge cohorts being delivered which would be more costly in the longer term. The LA's ability to meet its statutory duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places in the short term may be at risk.
- 4.6.2 There is also a corporate risk associated with failing to provide sufficient school/learning 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/learning places for children is one of our top priorities. These proposals have been brought forward to meet that need, and following the appropriate consultation process being followed we now seek to move them to the next stage. This would ensure that children in Leeds have the best possible start to their learning, and so deliver our vision of Leeds as a child friendly city.
- 5.2 The majority of responses received during the consultation were from parents and carers of children attending the school and local residents. Although the response rate was relatively low, guidance from the Department for Education states 'Decision-makers should not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view. Instead they should give the greatest weight to responses from those stakeholders likely to be most affected by a proposal- especially parents of children at the affected school(s)'. The majority of respondents support the proposal and view the expansion as being both necessary and important in terms of the local community being able to access places within its own community. This report seeks to address any concerns that were raised during the consultation. On balance the proposal remains strong and addresses the need for school places in an area where there are no other schools within walking distance and where additional housing will increase the numbers of families seeking places. It is therefore recommended that the proposal be approved.

6 Recommendations

Executive Board is asked to:

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proposal has been brought forward in time for places to be delivered for 2021; and

- Note the responsible officer for implementation is the Head of 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.