

Outcome of consultation to lower the age range of Wykebeck Primary School from 3-11 years to 2-11 years with effect from September 2023

Date: 14 December 2022

Report of: Director of Children and Families

Report to: Executive Board

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

The report contains details of a proposal brought forward by Leeds City Council to lower the age range of Wykebeck Primary School from 3-11 years to 2-11 years and create Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) provision for 24 eligible 2-year-olds in the area. The changes proposed form prescribed alterations under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and are aligned with the statutory process set out in the Department for Education's guidance document, 'Making significant changes (prescribed alterations) to maintained schools' (October 2018).

Wykebeck Primary School is located within an area of a high demographic demand for FEEE provision and the intention of creating places at a school-based setting offers parents a wider choice of this provision. By creating a further 24 places within the area, the proposal if approved, would support the Leeds Best City Priority to support families to give children the best start in life.

A consultation on a proposal to lower the age range of Wykebeck Primary School from September 2023 and create 24 FEEE places for eligible 2-year-olds, took place between 17th October and 6th November. This report summarises the responses received as part of the consultation process and seeks approval from Executive Board on the recommendations set out below.

Recommendations

- a) Note the outcome of the consultation and approve publication of a Statutory Notice on a proposal to lower the age range of Wykebeck Primary School from 3-11 years to 2-11 years with effect from 1 September 2023.
- b) Note that implementation of the proposal would be subject to the outcome of the proposed statutory notice.
- c) Note the responsible officer for implementation is the Head of Learning Systems.

What is this report about?

- 1 Leeds City Council has a duty to ensure that any two-year-old within the city, who meets the eligibility criteria is able to obtain a FEEE place, until the point they become eligible for the universal entitlement.
- 2 In 2013, to improve children's early years development and to support families with the cost of childcare, the government introduced 15 hours of FEEE for eligible two-year-olds.
- 3 This proposal would provide a further 24 places of early education for two-year-olds based at Wykebeck Primary School. The school is located within the Gipton area of Leeds which currently has three providers offering this provision. The area has a high level of population density and the highest number of families in the city who would meet the eligibility criteria for two-year-old FEEE.
- 4 Creating additional places at a local school, which has been judged good by Ofsted (February 2022), offers families a wider choice of provision, in addition to the two private providers and Little Owls nursery in the area.
- 5 As part of work to encourage families to take-up this provision in the most disadvantaged areas of the city, additional places need to be in place to support an increase in take-up.
- 6 Increasing the take-up of FEEE for eligible two-year-olds in Leeds is a key priority for the council. As well as providing local and accessible places, a range of providers are also required to meet the needs of families locally.
- 7 The area of Gipton, close to Wykebeck Primary School has three providers offering FEEE for eligible two-year-olds, however school staff are regularly approached by parents, enquiring about starting their children at the school before they reach their third birthday.
- 8 It is anticipated that if the proposal is approved, the availability of additional two-year-old places will appeal to families who have siblings already in school as well as the wider community.
- 9 If this proposal was to be approved, places for two-year-old eligible children would be available from September 2023, with the school offering 12 x 3-hour morning places and 12 x 3-hour afternoon places, term time only. Research shows this is the effective model of delivery both for the welfare of these young children attending and the financial viability of the school, providing 15 hours of FEEE per week for eligible children. The school understand that by setting up provision flexibly, for example with the option for parents to buy additional sessions, the offer would be open to all families within the community.

What impact will this proposal have?

- 10 This proposal creates a positive impact for families within the Gipton area and can only support the aim to create positive outcomes for all children in city and specifically those living in areas of most disadvantage.
- 11 The creation of a further 24 places in this area will not negatively impact on other local providers, due to the numbers of children in the area who are eligible.
- 12 As part of the Leeds Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) to improve attendance, attainment and achievement, the linked Leeds 3 A's plan has a priority of 'all children, young people and families are supported to access and regularly attend early years education settings', which this proposal supports.
- 13 Leeds City Council is focussed on increasing the take-up of two-year-old FEEE in the most disadvantaged areas of the city as well as raising awareness of the benefits of early education and childcare for families.

- 14 The intention of creating places at a school-based setting offers parents a wider choice of provision. We understand that in order to achieve good take-up rates, places must be local and accessible.
- 15 Although the intention is to provide places for families within Gipton and the wider Harehills area, being located near to the Burmantofts and Richmond Hill ward, this may provide an alternative to families there if places are available.
- 16 During the last Ofsted inspection, the lead inspector acknowledged that the early years provision provided children with a flying start and that there was evidence next time to go for an outstanding judgement in early years.
- 17 There is evidence that the children's communication and language significantly accelerate due to the work of the early year team at the school and to broaden that out to children from two years - should have a positive impact on their outcomes by the time they leave early years.
- 18 An Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening (EDCI) form that considered the consultation process is attached as appendix 1.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

Health and Wellbeing
 Inclusive Growth
 Zero Carbon

- 19 This proposal would support the Health and Wellbeing pillar as part of the Best City Ambition by ensuring children in all areas of the city have the best start in life and enjoy a healthy, happy and friendly childhood. Providing places close to where children live allows improved accessibility to local and desirable early years settings, is an efficient use of resources and reduces the risk of non-attendance.
- 20 In addition, by providing additional good quality early years places in an already established school, in an area where eligibility for places is high will contribute towards the achievement of the Child Friendly City aim of 'improving educational attainment and closing achievement gaps for children and young people vulnerable to poor learning outcomes.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected: Gipton & Harehills

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 21 The process in respect of this proposal has been managed in accordance with the relevant legislation and with local good practice.
- 22 The consultation on the proposal took place between 17 October 2022 and 6 November 2022, to seek the views of parents, nearby schools, early years providers and other stakeholders associated to the school. The school informed parents and carers of existing pupils in writing. Details about the consultation were sent via email to schools in the area to share with their parents and communities. Information was also shared via email with local ward members, MP's and other stakeholders. Information was available via the school's website, Leeds City Council website and through various social media platforms.
- 23 A total of 13 responses were received via the online survey during the consultation period as summarised below:
 - 9 (69%) - strongly supported
 - 2 (15%) - somewhat supported
 - 2 (15%) - strongly opposed.

24 A document with the anonymised consultation responses received during the consultation period is included as a background paper.

25 A summary of the views expressed by the 11 respondents who strongly or who somewhat supported the proposal are below:

- Some views highlighted the educational benefits and continuity of having nursery provision at a school environment as well as describing the importance of transition to school which will help children's well-being.
- Some respondents had a view that the provision will not only help with child development but also support families with the nurturing of their child and have a positive impact on their language, reading and writing skills as they move into school provision
- Some comments were made about a lack of 2-year old FEEE in the Gipton area and this proposal will support the opportunities and increase the take-up for local families.
- Some positive comments were made about the school and staff and their ability to support nursery aged children.

26 A summary of views and concerns expressed by the 2 respondents who somewhat or strongly objected to the proposal are below:

- a) **Concern:** the proposal removes the responsibility of the parents to raise and educate their own child, and makes it too easy for parents to do nothing.

Response: The introduction of FEEE for eligible 2-year-olds, by the government in 2013 was brought in to improve children's early years development and to support families with the cost of childcare in some of the most disadvantaged areas of the country. Eligible children can have up to 570 hours of free early education a year and up to 15 hours each week. Some childcare providers offer free places during the school holidays and parents are able to spread these across the year by taking fewer hours each week. This flexible approach is to support working parents during school holidays and provide continuity for children.

The benefits for children at this age should not be understated and eligible families are encouraged to take up the offer, although this is not statutory and therefore down to parental choice. As part of the child's development at home, this provision will also allow children to have access to resources and play experiences unlikely to be provided in most homes, including construction/maths opportunities, messy play, physical opportunities for climbing, stretching, balancing and ample exposure to develop language and literacy skills. Self-care skills such as toileting, independent dressing, hand washing, oral hygiene and using cutlery appropriately will be encouraged and progress observed.

- b) **Concern:** Children are too young, and the impact of the pandemic has made them vulnerable. Expecting children of this age to attend an educational setting could impact on some of the children who have not established solid relationships with their own families. They should be given time to recover without a spotlight and added pressure to meet standards.

Response: The early years of a child are crucial to providing the foundations for future physical and mental health. Research shows that children learn more in the first five years of life than at any other time, this is when the foundation of their future learning begins and attendance at a high-quality early learning and childcare setting supports this.

Early learning helps to give children the best start in life and promotes lifelong learning. If a child needs extra help to support their health, learning and development, staff in the setting

can help parents to access specialist support and advice. Getting this help early supports children to achieve their potential.

Staff are highly skilled in working with parents and children through initial settling periods and mitigating any separation stress. Some children and families may have been impacted by the pandemic and settings will quickly assess individual needs of a child and put in place support plans. Some children may have delayed language and communication skills and having access to a high-quality setting and interacting with peers, with skilled staff working with the children, will help towards ensuring young children are meeting their developmental milestones.

Although the proposal is to establish the provision within a school setting, parents do have other options to receive the provision through childminders, pre-schools, children's centres, day nurseries. If the proposal was to be approved, Wykebeck Primary School would build upon their established and successful nursery provision, with Ofsted highlighting that the early years leaders *"have ensured that activities for each area of learning build children's knowledge step by step. Staff check accurately on what children know and can do. They use this information to shape curriculum choices and offer additional support when needed. Leaders have taken effective action to develop children's communication, language and literacy skills. The early years team has built positive relationships with families"*.

What are the resource implications?

- 27 There is no capital cost to this scheme for the local authority.
- 28 The school have already committed to re-modelling their indoor and outdoor learning environment and appointed architects to develop the plans for the re-modelling of the nursery, working collaboratively with colleagues from the Assets and Access team. Irrespective of the proposal being approved, the school are committed to improving their early years provision space and have the funds available to carry this out. If the proposal is approved the additional remodelling will create space which can then be used to create the 24 two-year-old FEEE places.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 29 The proposal to lower age range at Wykebeck Primary School has been brought forward to meet the need for additional FEEE places for eligible 2-year-olds and create opportunities to give the best start possible for young children in the Gipton area. A decision not to proceed at this stage could mean a lack of available places for children within an area of high demographic need and the authority's ability to meet its legislative requirement to secure sufficient early education places in the area would be at risk.
- 30 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.

What are the legal implications?

- 31 The changes proposed form prescribed alterations under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and are aligned with the statutory process set out in the Department for Education's guidance document, 'Making significant changes (prescribed alterations) to maintained schools' (October 2018).
- 32 At its meeting in September 2021 Executive Board members agreed that in the future, and in response to the recommendation of the Children and Families Scrutiny Board, anonymised consultation responses be shared in full with Executive Board Members as 'background documents'. These would be published alongside the agenda papers, but not form part of the

formal agenda. Executive Board members are asked to consider the summary of responses in this report as part of their decision making, with the full consultation responses being available for reference by Members if needed.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

33 The Governing body of the school approached the local authority as part of the work the authority is doing to increase take-up of FEEE in the area, therefore no other options have been considered at this point. However, further additional places may be required in the future and options to increase existing provision will be considered.

How will success be measured?

34 If approved, the proposal will offer 24 places each year for eligible two-year-olds in one of the most disadvantaged areas of the city and support the ambition and priorities to give children and families the best start in life.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

35 This proposal has been brought forward to allow the local authority to lower the age range of Wykebeck Primary School and allow the school deliver 24 FEEE places for eligible two-year-olds from September 2023.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Equality, Diversity, Cohesion and Integration Screening (EDCI) form (consultation).

Background papers

- Anonymised consultation responses.