



Report to Leader (Education and Skills portfolio)

Decision Date: 12 January 2022

Reference number: EC01.22

Title: Proposal by the governing board of Steeple Claydon school to change the school's age range

Relevant councillor(s): Cllrs: Angela Macpherson, Frank Mahon and Michael Rand

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Ward(s) affected: Grendon Underwood

Recommendation: The Leader is recommended to agree to the proposal by the governing board of Steeple Claydon School that from February 2022 the school changes its age range from 4-11 to 2-11 years of age. This would enable the school to have its Early Years and Foundation Stage provision led and managed by a qualified teacher, rather than as now run by a committee of staff and governors. The school is a maintained Local Authority (LA) school.

Reason for decision: Following Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance the school undertook a public consultation on the proposed change of age range and then held a four-week representation period for people to comment on the proposal. There was total support for the proposed change.

Executive summary

- 1.1 The school's governing board supported by the Local Authority (LA) held a public consultation and then a four-week representation period on a proposal that from 1 February 2022, the school changes its age range from its current 4-11 to 2-11 years of age. The change if implemented would enable the school to run its pre-school provision led by a qualified teacher, rather than as now where it is led by a committee of staff and governors. The change is agreed would ensure the same high level of provision as presently provided would be maintained.

- 1.2 There was 100% support for the proposed change from parents, local community, staff and governors
- 1.3 The statutory guidance from the DfE on managing school changes such as the school's proposed change of age range, have been followed by the governing board and the Local Authority (LA).
- 1.4 As the statutory guidance has been followed and there is support for the proposal, the Leader is recommended to agree to the proposed change of age range.

Content of report

- 1.5 When a Local Authority or governing board wish to implement a prescribed alteration to a school that changes its status, they must firstly make people aware of the proposed change and then publish a statutory notice in a local newspaper and place details on the school website. The DfE guidance on such changes was republished in 2018: Making significant changes (prescribed alterations) to maintained schools, statutory guidance for proposer and decision makers 2018. A governing board, LA or the Schools Adjudicator must have regard to this guidance when exercising functions under the School Organisation Prescribed Alterations to Maintained schools (England) regulations 2013 (the prescribed alterations regulations). It should be read in conjunction with Parts 2 and 3 of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 and prescribed alterations regulations. The process followed by Overstone School's governing board and the LA is in accordance with the current statutory guidance.

If the change is implemented it would mean that the school would change its age range from 4-11 to 2-11 years of age. This change will not have an adverse impact on the quality of provision and the current high quality provision will be maintained. The Council's Early Years and Foundation Stage Team support the proposed change.

- 1.6 In line with DfE guidance on school reorganisations, the governing board held a public consultation from 25 June to 17 September on the proposed change. Of the 19 responses received 100% were in favour of the change. Details of the consultation were sent to parents/carers, local councillors, local schools, staff, governors, the local parish council, Oxford Diocese, local MP, relevant Buckinghamshire Council teams and other organisations connected to the school.
- 1.7 Following the end of the public consultation the outcome was assessed and in light of the support for the proposal the decision was taken to move to the next stage of the DfE's statutory process on school reorganisations. The school published a statutory notice in the Buckingham and Winslow Advertiser on 19 November 2021 with a deadline of Friday 17 December 2021 for people to make representations, (i.e. to comment on, object to or support the proposed expansion). 17

representations were received during the four week period: all expressed support for the proposal. At the same time the school placed additional information and the background to their proposal on the school's website.

1.08 When making the recommendation the Local Authority has taken account of the Public Sector Equality Duty. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and forwarded to the Head of Equalities who raised no objection or comment. If the expansion takes place, the school will continue to offer places to children of any faith or no faith and they will continue to welcome and support children and their families/carers with special educational needs and disabilities.

1.09 The school was inspected by Ofsted in July 2019 when it was graded as Good.

1.10 As the statutory process has been followed, the Leader is recommended to agree to the change of age range at the school, effective from 1 February 2022.

Other options considered

1.11 The only other option would be for the Leader not to agree to the change. However as 100% of those responding to the public consultation were in favour of the change and all who commented during the representation period supported the change, this would be contrary to the preference for change expressed by the those responding to the statutory notice and public consultation. The recommendation is therefore that the change is agreed.

Legal and financial implications

1.12 When an LA or governing board wish to implement a prescribed alteration to a school that changes its status, they must firstly make people aware of the proposed change and then publish a statutory notice in a local newspaper and place details on the school website. The Department for Education guidance on such changes was revised in 2018: Making significant changes (prescribed alterations) to Maintained Schools: Statutory Guidance for proposer and Decision Makers 2018. A governing board, LA or the Schools Adjudicator must have regard to this guidance when exercising functions under the School Organisation Prescribed Alterations to Maintained schools (England) regulations 2013 (the prescribed alterations regulations). It should be read in conjunction with Parts 2 and 3 of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 and prescribed alterations regulations. The process followed by Steeple Claydon School's governing board and the LA has followed the current statutory guidance. In line with Department for Education guidance a public consultation was held, followed by the publication of a statutory notice in the Buckingham and Winslow Advertiser inviting people to make representations on the proposed closure. In addition, advice has been sought on the contents of this report from the Principal Lawyer.

- 1.13 The proposed change of age range would have no direct financial implications for the LA. As the provision is nursery provision and not for reception aged children, revenue funding for the change of age range will come from the early years funding block for those children accessing the free entitlement for early years provision, as the children joining the provision will not initially be of statutory school age. Advice has been sought from the Section 151 officer.

Corporate implications

- 1.14 The proposed change will not have an adverse impact on the environment as it will not entail an increase in car traffic.

Consultation and communication

- 1.15 As outlined in the report a public consultation took place as did a four-week representation period. Both these gave the local community a chance to raise any questions and comment on the proposed change of status. Local councillors were made aware of the proposals and Cllr Macpherson stated that she supported the proposal.

Next steps and review

- 1.16 If the proposal is agreed, the school will arrange to update the DfE's records about the change and inform the local community and parents/carers of the change.

Background papers

- 1.17 Attached is the board's statutory notice and additional information that was made public.

Your questions and views (for key decisions)

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the Cabinet Member to consider please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by telephone 01296 382343 or email democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk