

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL CABINET

13th June 2023

Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education: Councillor Fiona Baker

Report Title Proposal to extend the age-range at Croughton All Saints CE Primary School (Formal agreement to lower the age range)

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List of Appendices

Appendix A – Croughton Primary consultation summary report

Appendix B – Croughton Primary Equalities Impact Assessment (EgIA)

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. West Northamptonshire Council (WNC) proposes the prescribed alteration to lower the admission age range of Croughton All Saints Church of England (CE) Primary School, High Street, Croughton, Brackley NN13 5LT by changing the age range from 4 to 11 years to 3 to 11 years. This would enable the school to offer funded early education entitlement (FEEE) places to three-year-old children, which would bridge the gap in provision. The proposed alteration will make provision for up to 13 full time equivalent (FTE) three-year-olds to attend the nursery provision.

2. Executive Summary

- 1.2. Croughton All Saints CE Primary School is proposing to create 13 FTE nursery places for 3-year-olds, this would bridge a gap in provision since the closure of Croughton Pre School. The proposal would also support the school's sustainability, as the overall reception intake has been declining over the last three years.

3. Recommendations

- a) It is recommended that the Cabinet approve the proposal to lower the admissions age range at Croughton All Saints CE Primary School, from 4 years to 3 years, to enable the school to offer FEEE to three-years-olds from September 2023.

Reason for Recommendations

- To comply with the statutory process to lower the age range by 1 year.
- To ensure the council can provide sufficient 3-year-old funded early entitlement places, for universal entitlement in the Croughton area.
- For children to benefit from high quality teaching and learning experience and a provision led by the Head (QTS).
- To support younger children with a smooth transition and integrated approach to school readiness.
- To maximise on numbers of children and support the sustainability of a small village school, impacted by reduced admissions numbers.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 Croughton All Saint CE School is a small village primary school currently serving 4- to 11-year-olds. The school's published admission number (PAN) for September 2022 is 25 for Year reception intake. The school has a total capacity of 175 from reception to year 6, however spring 2023 census data shows that only 107 children were on roll at the school.
- 4.2 Croughton All Saints CE Primary is a Voluntary Controlled (VC) School, the Governing board are seeking to extend the provision to include three-year olds. The proposed nursery provision is to offer 13 FTE nursery places, to the local and neighbouring community. The delivery would comprise of a mixed model of part-time and full -time provision; 15 hours free universal entitlement and up to 30 hours for working parents. Any additional hours following the free hours would be chargeable and as agreed with parents.
- 4.3 For the past 20 years early years provision has been provided by two main private providers in the Croughton village area, Croughton Preschool located in the village hall and Puddleducks day nursery which is situated on the Croughton All Saints school site. Puddleducks Day Nursery offers 40 full day care places for children aged between 3 months to 8 years old. Croughton preschool delivered 26 sessional places for two- and three-years olds FEEE children in the village. The two providers met the needs of the demographics of the community and provided sufficiency of early years places. Since the sudden closure of Croughton Preschool in December 2022, there has been a gap in three-year-old FEEE provision in Croughton. The governor's proposal to develop their own early years foundation stage unit (EYFS) is to bridge the sufficiency gap, which has now emerged. The nursery unit will also support the school's sustainability, as they experience declining numbers in reception year.
- 4.4 The existing early years provider Puddleduck Day Nursery operates an all year-round full day care model, offering flexible patterns to meet the needs of the working demographic. They are open between 8am and 6pm, Monday to Friday for 51 weeks of the year. The school have a positive working relationship with the onsite provider, they have actively engaged and consulted the provider on the proposals. The private provider is delivering at full capacity and recognises the school's proposal would provide essential three-year places to local children. The provider is in support the proposal.
- 4.5 Under the proposal the school nursery class capacity would be 13 FTE places, these would be delivered within a mixed class structure, combining the nursery children with the reception children. Following a statutory consultation in October 2022, the school have approval to reduce the reception PAN from 25 to 20 with effect from September 2023. This change forms part of the preliminary planning to ensure that the school can accommodate the nursery places. The school have reviewed the floor-space requirement as set out in the EYFS statutory guidance; the

reception classroom can accommodate a maximum capacity of 28 children under 5. The school has an additional 4 classroom where they provide the key stage 1 and 2 provision.

- 4.6 The school has been experiencing a decline in reception intake over the last three years, based on autumn census data. The proposal to lower the age range, would support the school to generate additional income, utilise teaching staff and sustain the school financial position. (Refer to section 6. Issues and choices)
- 4.7 Under this proposal, children aged 3 years would formally become part of the same structure as the school within the nursery school provision and on the nursery roll.
- 4.8 The changes proposed are expected to be permanent. LAs can propose a change of age range of one year group or more for community schools (including the adding or removal of nursery provision) by following the prescribed alterations' statutory process.
- 4.9 A statutory proposal and consultation to extend the age range of Croughton All saints CE Primary school was published on the Council's website on 20 March 2023.
The school undertook a 4-week open consultation, which concluded 28 February 2023.
- 4.10 If Cabinet approve this request, the school aim to open and deliver the nursery provision from 1 September 2023.
- 4.11 Croughton All saints CE Primary School proposes to offer the following:-
- Parents can claim funded places for three-year olds, either 15 hours universal or up to 30 hours for working parents.
 - Sessions will be delivered during term time, Monday to Friday and in line with the schools opening hours.
 - The provision will support the learning, development and school readiness for a smooth transition to the next stage of education.
- 4.12 Benefits for children and parents include:
- Provision led by the Headteacher, Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)
 - School readiness and a smooth transition to reception, due to familiarity of the environment and staff.
 - Interacting opportunities and developing positive links with peers
 - For those who have siblings in other year groups, ease and convenience of having all children on the same site.

For the school include: -

- One cohesive team working with the school's early years cohort.
- All children in the early year's foundation phase, within one mixed class

- Continuing to build on the existing high-quality teaching and learning experience for all children.
- One OFSTED inspection and the Head leading the EYFS unit.
- An over-arching benefit to the school's financial sustainability.

5. Issues and Choices

- 5.1 Do nothing. This would result in a decrease in three-year-old FEEE places in the Croughton village area, due to closure of Croughton Pre-school.
- 5.2 Support this proposal – the creation of 13 places for three-year-olds would bridge a sufficiency gap and also give parents access to term time / school day provision. It would also help to stabilise the school as a result of their declining number of children on roll in years reception to 6.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

- 6.1.1 The school are up to date with their year-end processes, the overall outturn balance at the end of 2022-23 is a surplus position £130k including a 10% uncommitted reserve of £67k
- 6.1.2 The addition of the three-year-old provision does not significantly change their use of their building, therefore there is no capital costs. Neither is there to be a significant impact on the finances if the school maintain the uptake of the 13 FTE places.
- 6.1.3 Impact on the WNC general fund – no impact is forecast as a result of the extended age range. If unforeseen financial problems occur, for example if the uptake is lower than 13 children in the early years provision, the school is obligated to carry forward deficit balances into the next financial year, as per the scheme for financing schools. The school would then be expected bring the school back into financial balance over a maximum of 3 years. The risk to, and impact on, WNC general fund is therefore low.
- 6.1.4 As a maintained primary, with a nursery unit they will receive dedicated schools grant funding for early years children, from the Early Years National Funding Formula which is formulated on hours that children attend the setting.
- 6.1.5 The school has sufficient and suitable space to accommodate the nursery age children.
- 6.1.6 A summary of the costs associated with 13FTEs's include:

Summary of costs associated to proposal nursery unit	£ per annum
Increased Costs	23,206.
Average Staffing costs Level 3 TA and Midday supervisor	
Increased Income for 13 pupils, 570 + 570 hours 38 weeks per early years child. Hourly rate of £4.18 Total Income £4,765.20 per annum per child	61,947.60

6.1.7 Croughton All Saints governing board have identified and considered the potential risks alongside the overall benefits for children and families.

- Low take-up rate of the 13 FTE places within the nursery
- Loss of income from supplies and services
- Income against expenditure costs of staff, supplies and services

6.1.8 The school intend on closely monitor their nursery intake numbers into, as any risk of reduced numbers from the forecasted 13 FTE's, would require the school to be reactive to the situation and consider reviewing their teaching structure and associated costs.

6.1.9 Autumn Census data table 1, shows the trend of declining numbers in reception over the last two years, and the declining birth rate will continue to have an impact on the small village school. Table 2 shows September intake numbers for all NCY groups, the impact of low reception numbers is having an impact on the whole school, as cohort progress through the school. On average the school is delivering at 66% capacity, it is anticipated that the nursery provision will attract increasing numbers of children at the school.

Table 1 – Showing autumn census data for year Reception.

Academic Year	Autumn YR	
	Published Admission Number Year Reception	Numbers on roll
2019/20	25	18
2020/21	25	25
2021/22	25	14
2022/23	25	11

Table 2 – Showing autumn census data for NCY reception to year 6

	CAPACITY NCY -Year 6	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Numbers of children on roll at Census	175	117	123	114	108
Take-up/ utilised capacity %		67%	70%	65%	62%

6.1.10 Projection data for year reception children suggests a gradual increase in numbers of children over the next 3 years for the area as a result of new housing development in the Brackley area, South Northamptonshire. However, these increases are materialising in primary schools near Brackley, these include The Radstone Primary School and Bracken Less Primary school. Croughton All Saints CE Primary school is located approximately 4 miles away from that locality area, exceeding the 2 miles radius travelling distance for primary aged children. Therefore, there

is no risk from a place planning perspective that demand will increase for year reception children within Croughton area, which would result in a sufficiency issue. The nursery unit would however support the sustainability of the school, due to declining numbers in year reception.

6.2 Legal

- 6.2.1 The process for lowering the age range to include a nursery to Voluntary Controlled school, is set out in the 'Making significant changes (prescribed alterations) to maintained school, Statutory guidance (England) Regulation 2013. The local authority must comply with the Regulation and give due regard to the Department for Education Guidance. have due regard for the regulations. The proposal has been published and subject to a public consultation, and this report is asking Cabinet to make a final decision as to whether to approve the proposal for implementation.
- 6.2.2 The Local Authority needs to give careful consideration to its duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and ascertain whether or not the proposal would have any impact on any protected characteristic group. The impact could be positive or negative and at varying ranges. The Local Authority should carry out an Equality Impact Assessment for this purpose. Even if any impact is identified the LA should rationalise its decision especially if there is likely to be more negative impact on any protected characteristic group. Aside from the impact that this proposal could have primarily on the cohort of pupils and parents the LA should also be mindful of the impact it would have on the school staff and there is likely to be an expansion of the number of pupils and possibly an increase to the existing staff's responsibilities.
- 6.2.3 The Local Authority has carried out a consultation which is required when making " Key Decisions" but it needs to ensure that it is a proper process, it has involved all interested parties and taken into consideration any feedback from them in evaluating its decision.
- 6.2.4 Although there is no longer a statutory 'pre-publication' consultation period for prescribed alteration changes, there is a strong expectation that governing bodies and local authorities will consult interested parties in developing their proposal prior to publication, consent of the site trustees and where a school is designated as having a religious character the trustees of the school, the diocese or relevant diocesan board , or any other relevant faith body.
- 6.2.5 Decision makers will need to be satisfied that the appropriate fair and open representation period has been carried out and that the proposal has been given full consideration to all the responses received during the pre-publication consultation. 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). Decision must be made within a period of 2 months of the representation period , or the proposal must be referred to the School Adjudicator.
- 6.2.6 Although there is no longer a statutory 'pre-publication' consultation period for prescribed alteration changes, there is a strong expectation that governing bodies and local authorities will consult interested parties in developing their proposal prior to publication, to take into account all relevant considerations. Governing bodies should have the

consent of the site trustees and where a school is designated as having a religious character the trustees of the school, the diocese or relevant diocesan board, or any other relevant faith body.

6.3 Risk

6.3.1 An Equalities Impact Screening (EIS) has been completed and signed out by the Equalities Team.

6.3.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out on the proposal to lower the age range at Croughton All Saints CE Primary School. The school's EqIA is attached, reference Appendix B to the report.

6.3.3 There are no significant risks arising from the proposed recommendation in this report.

6.4 Consultation and Communications

Croughton All Saints CE Primary School conducted a consultation commencing on 24 January to 28 February 2023. This was made available to staff, governors, parents, children, onsite private provider and wider local community and stakeholders. The face-to-face open consultation event was held 21 February 2023. [Proposed Nursery Class Consultation – Croughton All Saints C.E. Primary School](#). A summary of the consultation can be found in Appendix A.

6.4.1 The council conducted a statutory public consultation from 20 March to 14 April 2023, no responses were received by either post or via email. The consultation was made available on the WNC website [Croughton All Saints CE Primary School - notice of consultation 2023 - West Northamptonshire Council - Citizen Space](#)

6.5 Consideration by Overview and Scrutiny

6.5.1 The scrutiny committee has not requested to review the proposal.

6.6 Climate Impact

6.6.1 As this provision will be on an existing school site and delivering to the same local community, no issues have been highlighted in relation to increase in traffic or climate impact.

6.7 Community Impact

6.7.1 The EqIA has identified positive impact on the community by providing choice and creating additional places for families with children aged 3 years. (Appendix B)

7. Background Papers

7.1 DfE January 2023 – Statutory Guidance for proposer and decision makers - [Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

7.2 DfE March 2021 – Setting the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five - [Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91222/Statutory_framework_for_the_early_years_foundation_stage.pdf) ([publishing.service.gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/91222/Statutory_framework_for_the_early_years_foundation_stage.pdf))