

St Peter's Church of England (VC) School, Coggeshall: Expansion of School and lowering age limit to offer Early Years and Child Care places

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Report title: St Peter's Church of England (VC) School, Coggeshall: Expansion of School and lowering age limit to offer Early Years and Child Care places	
Report to: Councillor Ray Gooding - Cabinet Member for Education	
Report author: Carolyn Terry, Early Years and Childcare (EYCC) Sufficiency and Sustainability Manager	
Date: 28 August 2020	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: Braintree Eastern	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To report on the publication of the statutory notice on the change in age range of St Peters Church of England (VC) Primary School, Coggeshall (the "School"), in order to provide new early education places.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Agree the expansion of St Peters Church of England (VC) Primary School, Coggeshall to provide 16 early education places.
- 2.2. Agree the lowering of the age limit at the School by lowering the School's admission age from 4 to 2 years.

3. Summary of issue

- 3.1 Essex has experienced a significant rise in the demand for early years and childcare places in the last few years as a result of a rising birth rate and new housing development. In addition, the introduction of the extended free early education entitlement (EFE) funding, offering 30 hours of funded childcare for eligible families, has further increased the demand. Following the closure of Honywood Preschool in July 2020, Coggeshall is set to lose 16 full time early years and childcare places which would mean some local families may be unable to access a local childcare place from Autumn 2020.
- 3.2 Essex County Council ("ECC") has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient early years and childcare places for children living in the county. In order to do this, ECC carry out childcare sufficiency data collections from early years and childcare providers each term to determine capacity of childcare places within each ward. This information is used to forecast where there is likely to be a shortage of early years and childcare places available.

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- 3.3 The latest forecasts of pupil numbers indicate that there will be a need for 96 additional early years and childcare places across the Coggeshall ward following planned housing within the area. In addition, the Braintree district has seen a demand for additional early years and childcare places further indicating the demand for these spaces.
- 3.4 A stated priority of the Essex Organisation Strategy 2017-2021 is to offer children good economic prospects by providing an outstanding education. ECC is under a duty to promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. It must also ensure that there is sufficient quality early years provision in the county to promote diversity and increase parental choice.
- 3.5 The Honywood Pre-school based on the local Honywood Secondary school site was offering 16 full time early years places each day to local families with children aged 2 years to 4 years old. This pre-school closed permanently at the end of the Summer 2020 term. As a result, St Peters Church of England (VC) Primary School wish to expand to offer 16 additional early years places and lower the admission age at the School to be able to provide early years places from the Autumn 2020 term to replace the ones previously offered by Honywood Pre-school.
- 3.6 The proposal to expand St Peters Church of England (VC) Primary School and lower the admissions age of the School has been brought forward by the School and its Governors. The School undertook formal consultation with all parents/carers of current pupils and local early years and childcare providers during June 2020. This consultation was carried out through letters to all parents, an article published on the School website, and an article published in the local paper. The consultation sought to establish whether there was support for the proposal to expand the School through the introduction of a nursery provision for 2 to 4 years olds with effect from September 2020.
- 3.7 The School received 152 responses to the consultation questionnaire. 144 were supportive of the proposal to include a nursery provision at the School. The 8 that were not in support cited concerns over space on site. The school have reviewed this concern and the space available and are confident that there is sufficient space on the school site. Ninety-five parents that responded indicated that they would be interested in sending their child to the early years and childcare provision if it were provided.
- 3.8 The expansion of the School will help ensure that local children continue to have the opportunity to access a local pre-school providing high quality early education. The School received agreement at the July 2020 full governing body meeting to propose the lowering of the age range from September 2020.
- 3.9 In considering the expansion of the School, the impact on other local provision has been considered. Since these proposals replace places previously provided by the Honywood Preschool and are not new places, they are not expected to have any detrimental impact upon other provision. The new places

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will help the School develop capacity to meet the predicted increased demand across the ward due to local housing developments that are underway.

- 3.10 The expansion will help ensure local children will continue to be able to access local early years places. The expansion provides a coherent strategic response to the need for additional places.

4. Options

- 4.1 Option 1 - Do nothing (not recommended).

Should the expansion not be approved:

- there will be insufficient childcare places in the area from September 2020 for children to access a local childcare and a funded early learning place; and
- there will not be any options to meet the increased childcare demand from local housing developments.

- 4.2 Option 2 - Approve the addition of the 16 early years places at the School and the lowering of the age range from 4 to 2 (recommended option).

If approved: -

- the area will benefit from continuing to be able to offer local early years places to local children
- there will be capacity to increase the numbers to meet the increased demand from the local housing developments.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If approved, the School plan to have the nursery provision in place during the Autumn 2020 term.

6. Issues for consideration

6.1. Financial Implications

- 6.1.1. School nursery units are funded by the Early Years Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, with the funding being generated by a termly headcount submission to the Early Years Portal.
- 6.1.2 The School has produced a 3 year business plan and cash forecast that shows that by lowering their age range and offering early years places the school will remain in a sustainable position.
- 6.1.3 The School also run before and after school clubs and intend to build on this with the early years places which further improves the sustainability
- 6.1.4 St Peter's Church Of England (VC) Primary school has recently undergone a viability report by ECC Schools Planning and Admissions and is aware that any increase in published admission numbers may result in there not being enough

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space to maintain the preschool. In the event of this happening, an early years offer has been added to the scheme for any future viability studies to be undertaken by ECC Schools Planning and Admissions

- 6.1.5 Should there not be enough space for school expansion and the pre-school, the school are confident that the affected staff within the pre-school would be able to be redeployed into the School in alternative roles.

6.2. Legal implications

- 6.2.1. Local authorities must continue to plan for and secure sufficient schools and places for their area in line with their duties under section 14 of the Education Act 1996.
- 6.2.2. Under Section 6 of the Childcare Act 2006, ECC must ensure that there is sufficient childcare within the local area. Section 6 of the Act defines 'sufficient childcare' as sufficient to meet the requirements of parents in the area who require childcare in order to enable them to take up, or remain in, work or undertake education or training which could reasonably be expected to assist them to obtain work.
- 6.2.3. Section 7 of the Childcare Act sets out a duty to secure free early years provision for preschool children. Currently every child aged three or four is entitled to 15 hours per week free early years provision for 38 weeks of the year. Eligible working parents are also entitled to an additional 15 hours per week of free early years provision over 38 weeks of the year, this is known as the 30 hours offer. The Free Early Education Entitlement for 2 year olds (FEEE2) currently entitles 40% of the most disadvantaged 2 year olds to 15 hours per week of free nursery education.
- 6.2.4. The Regulations governing the alteration of the lower age limit of a community school are set out in the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and accompanying statutory guidance and should be complied with.

7. Equality and Diversity implications

- 7.1. The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful;
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

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7.2. The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).

7.3. The equality impact assessment which has been carried out indicates that the proposals in this report will have a disproportionately adverse impact on those with a disability as a result of access. Appropriate mitigating actions have been identified and will be implemented to ensure that there is no adverse impact as a result of this decision.

8. List of appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment

9. List of Background papers

9.1. Consultation responses

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
Councillor Ray Gooding, Cabinet Member for Education	07/09/20

In consultation with:

Role	Date
Executive Director for Finance and Technology (S151 Officer) Stephanie Mitchener	4/9/20
Director, Legal and & Assurance (Monitoring Officer) Katie Bray on behalf of Paul Turner	28.8.20