

By: Rosalind Turner, Managing Director, Children, Families and Education

To: Sarah Hohler, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education

Subject: PROPOSED CHANGE OF AGE RANGE FOR NEWINGTON CHURCH OF ENGLAND (VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED) PRIMARY SCHOOL, SITTINGBOURNE (FROM 3 - 11 YEARS TO 4 - 11 YEARS) BY THE CLOSURE OF THE MAINTAINED NURSERY UNIT (AND ITS REPLACEMENT BY A VOLUNTARY PRE-SCHOOL PROVISION)

Classification: Unrestricted

---

Summary: The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Education is requested to issue a public notice to close the maintained nursery unit at Newington Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School and to change the age range from 3-11 years to 4-11 years with effect from 26 April 2011

---

## **Introduction**

1. (1) A report was presented to the School Organisation Advisory Board at its meeting on 10 December asking for their comments on the proposal outlined below. The report is attached as appendix 1.

## **The Proposal**

2. (1) The proposal is to close the maintained nursery unit. This would be achieved by changing the age-range of Newington CE Primary School from 3-11 years to 4-11 years.

(2) The school would cease to offer nursery classes from April 2011. The Cherries Pre-school would move into the maintained nursery unit accommodation in April 2011. Children entitled to receive the Early Years Foundation Stage Entitlement for 15 hours a term after their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday would be able to do so at The Cherries Pre-school, so provision in the locality would be maintained in a flexible offer which parents prefer. If this proposal goes ahead, any children attending the maintained nursery unit at the time of its closure would be guaranteed a place at The Cherries Pre-School.

(3) If The Cherries relocated to the maintained nursery unit accommodation from the village hall, they would be able to consult the community about their childcare needs, and increase the offer available to include breakfast clubs, lunch clubs, afterschool clubs, afternoon and all day sessions.

## **The Consultation**

3. (1) The consultation document was distributed to parents/carers, school staff, nursery staff, governors and County Councillors, Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Authorities, local library, the Borough and Parish Councils, and others, in accordance with the agreed County policy. The document was also posted on the KCC website and the link to the website widely circulated via email.

(2) Approximately 300 copies of the public consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses.

## **Responses to the Public Consultation**

### *Written Responses*

4. 48 responses have been received, of which 47 are in favour, and 1 is undecided. A written response was also received from the Governing Body which is included below.

## **Views of Local Member**

5. The Local Member is Mr Keith Ferrin who said "I have no comments to make on this proposal".

## **Views of Local Member of Parliament**

6. The following response has been received via email from Mr Henderson's constituency office:

*"So long as a pre-school nursery provision is available to the residents of Newington within easy access of the villages Mr Henderson would have no objection to changes which will provide a better service to them".*

## **Views of Swale Borough Council**

7. The views of the Leader and Chief Executive were sought but neither wished to comment.

## **Views of the Diocesan Authorities**

8. The Diocese supports the proposal as it will enable the school to concentrate on raising standards within the 4-11 age range.

## **Views of the Governing Body**

9. A written response was received from the Chairman of the Governing Body on behalf of the governors and reads as follows:

*"The Board of Governors would have very much liked to have kept the Nursery running along the original lines, clearly, the necessary numbers of children to make it viable are not going to be forthcoming.*

*In the circumstances, we believe that the proposed solution is the best for the school and for the village and we unanimously endorse it.*

*In addition, we have taken account of parents' concerns that there should be a smooth transition for the children currently attending and, following discussions with The Cherries and the relevant parents, a plan acceptable to all parties has been agreed.*

*We would therefore now urge that the proposal is approved."*

### **Views of the Local Trust Board**

10. Chris White the chairman of the Local Trust Board has given the following response on behalf of the Board. "I agree with this proposal as I feel it will benefit the children in Newington by giving them the opportunity of the wider range of childcare provision that The Cherries could offer."

### **Resource Issues**

#### *Capital & Revenue*

11. (1) Since the opening of the maintained nursery unit in 2006 it has operated at an annual deficit and the current year end will also show a deficit. If this proposal goes ahead the school will no longer have to bear this loss from the school budget.

(2) If this proposal goes ahead, The Cherries Pre-school will move into the maintained nursery unit accommodation and a lease issued by Kent County Council with an estimated rent of £8,000 per annum. The Cherries Pre-school has produced a Business Plan outlining the future financial sustainability of the pre-school should the proposal go ahead.

#### *Human*

(3) The part-time nursery teacher and the part-time nursery assistant would be redeployed within the school.

### **The views of the School Organisation Advisory Board**

12. The School Organisation Advisory Board at its meeting on 10 December 2010 unanimously supported the proposal and recommended the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education issue a public notice to close the maintained nursery unit at Newington Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School and to change the age range from 3-11 years to 4-11 years with effect from 26 April 2011

## **Recommendation**

13. The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children, Families and Education is requested to issue a public notice to close the maintained nursery unit at Newington Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School and to change the age range from 3-11 years to 4-11 years with effect from 26 April 2011

Alison Osborne  
Area Education Officer  
(01227) 284461  
alison.osborne@kent.gov.uk

The Local Member is Mr Keith Ferrin

---

*Background Documents:*

None

*Previous Committee Reports:*

*School Organisation Advisory Board – 10 December 2010*

*School Organisation Advisory Board – 14 July 2010*