

To: **Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education**

From **Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education**

Decision No: 17/000049

Subject: **Proposal to permanently change the age range of Herne Bay (Community) Infant School from 3-7 years to 2-7 years from September 2017**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: Herne Bay East – Andrew Cook

Summary: This report sets out the results of the public consultation on the proposal to permanently change the age range of Herne Bay Infant School from the current 3-7 years to 2-7 years from September 2017.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member is asked to:

(a) Authorise the Corporate Director - Children, Young People and Education to issue a Public Notice to permanently change the age range of Herne Bay Infant School from 3-7 years to 2-7 years from September 2017.

Should objections, not already considered by the Cabinet Member when taking this decision be received during the public notice period, a separate decision will be required in order to continue with the proposal, to allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Early Years Education and Childcare section of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2017-2021 sets out the legislative context by which the local authority commissions additional Early Years places. Section 7 of the Childcare Act gives local authorities a related duty to secure Free Early Education provision for Pre-school children and the Childcare Act 2016 sets out the Government's intention to increase the Free Entitlement, including for 2 year olds meeting the criteria. Kent was set a target by the Government to initially create 3,095 'Free for 2' places in September 2013 rising to 7,000 places by September 2014 and continuing to date.

2. Proposal

- 2.1 Herne Bay Infant School currently provides Early Years Education for children aged 3 and 4 in the maintained nursery class. The provision operates under the school's Ofsted registration. Following discussions with KCC Early Years and Childcare Service around gaps in provision locally, the school is seeking to provide places for 2 year olds from September 2017, so that local families can benefit by having access to places at their local setting. It is therefore proposed to permanently lower the age range of the school by one year and admit up to 4 children aged 2 per session into the maintained nursery class. Two of the 4 places will be available for children meeting the criteria for Free entitlement.

3. Financial, Legal and Equalities Implications

- 3.1 **Financial Implications:** There are no financial implications relating to this decision.
- 3.2 **Legal Implications:** These proposals are set out in accordance with Section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Kent County Council intends to make prescribed alterations to Herne Bay Infant School in order to permanently change the age range from 3-7 years to 2-7 years from September 2017.
- 3.3 **Equalities Implications:** An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. To date no comments have been received and no changes are required to the Equality Impact Assessment.

4. Vision and Priorities for Improvement

- 4.1 This proposal will help to secure our ambition “to ensure that Kent’s young people have access to the education, work and skills opportunities necessary to support Kent business to grow and be increasingly competitive in the national and international economy” as set out in ‘Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council’s Strategic Statement (2016-2020)’.
- 4.2 This proposal supports the aims of the Early Years and Childcare Strategy 2016-2019 to:
- develop a more integrated approach to early years and childcare provision and services
 - ensure better continuity of provision and services across the 0 – 5 age range
 - ensure an increasing number of children are school ready at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - mitigate the effect of poverty, inequality and disadvantage through the provision of high quality early education and childcare, including support for parents and carers and narrowing early development achievement gaps.
- 4.3 The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2017-2021 sets out how we will carry out our responsibility for ensuring there are sufficient

places of high quality, in the right places, for all learners and this proposal supports that aim to provide sufficient places where they are needed.

5. Report on the Consultation Outcomes

- 5.1 A four week public consultation took place between 2 and 30 May 2017.
- 5.1 A total of 42 written responses were received. An analysis of the responses received is provided at Appendix 1.
- 5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. To date no comments have been received. A copy of the Equality Impact Assessment, together with the public consultation letter can be found at: <http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/HerneBayInfantSchool>

6. Views

- 6.1 The view of the Local Members
The local members prior to the County Council elections were informed of the proposal at the start of the consultation. Following elections, the newly elected local member for Herne Bay East was informed of the proposal.
- 6.2 The view of the Headteacher and Governing Body
The Headteacher and Governing Body fully support the proposal and believe it will be beneficial to the families in their school community.
- 6.3 The view of the Area Education Officer
This proposal has come forward based on the identified need for additional places for children aged two in Heron ward. Herne Bay Infant School is best placed to provide these places, two of which will be for children who meet the criteria for funded places. The provision of additional places for two year olds will help to address the gap in outcomes between all children and children from vulnerable groups such as those with Special Educational Needs or those who would attract pupil premium.

7. Delegation to Officers

- 7.1 The Officer Scheme of Delegation; under Appendix 2 part 4 of the Council's Constitution, provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions needed to implement it.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 This proposal to permanently lower the age range of Herne Bay Infant School will enable the school to provide places for 2 year olds, benefiting local families. The proposal will also support the sustainability of the maintained nursery class.

9. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education is asked to:

(a) Authorise the Corporate Director - Children, Young People and Education to issue a Public Notice to permanently change the age range of Herne Bay Infant School from 3-7 years to 2-7 years from September 2017.

Should objections, not already considered by the Cabinet Member when taking this decision be received during the public notice period, a separate decision will be required in order to continue with the proposal, to allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

10. Background Documents

10.1 Vision and Priorities for Improvement

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-andemployment-policies/vision-and-priorities-for-improvement>

10.2 Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2017-21

www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision

10.3 Consultation Document and Equality Impact Assessment.

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/HerneBayInfantSchool>

11. Contact details

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**Proposal to permanently change the age range of Herne Bay Infant School
from 3-7 years to 2-7 years from September 2017.**

Summary of written responses

Consultation documents (hard copies) distributed: 400 (approx.)

Responses received: 42

	Support	Against	Undecided	Total
Parents/Carers – School	11	2	2	15
Parents/Carers – School and Seashells Nursery	-	1	-	1
Parent/Carers – Seashells Nursery	7	-	-	7
Parents/Carers – School and another local nursery	1	2	-	3
Parents/Carers – another local nursery	1	-	-	1
Governors	1	-	-	1
Parent/Governor	1	-	-	1
Members of Staff	12	-	-	12
Other Interested Party	-	1	-	1
Total	34	6	2	42

A summary of the main points:

In support of the proposal

Parents of children attending Herne Bay Infant School and/or Seashells Nursery

- Child starts Year R in September and sibling turns two in November, currently searching for a nursery. Sibling is familiar with Seashells and some of the staff there. On a practical note it would be really convenient for us to have our children attend the same schools/nursery.
- My child attends Seashells, I also have a two year old who I would like to attend the Nursery asap (x2)
- My child is very happy at the nursery and having two year olds will be good for the older children to relate with younger children, learning to behave socially in different situations.
- I understand that the Nursery like children to be independent but do feel that areas such as the painting easel and toilets need more supervision.
- From 2 ½ my child was ready to attend pre-school but understand this would not suit every child.
- I would definitely make use of this proposal if it proceeds. I think earlier education is becoming increasingly more important. (Has a 6 month old).

Members of Staff

- A welcomed change.
- This is a very exciting prospect for our school.
- Good idea for both families and Herne Bay Infant School

- Lowering the age range will benefit those parents who have older children at the school/setting by providing childcare within just one setting.
- Lowering the starting age to two years will enable children who begin their school life with Herne Bay Infant School longer to reach their potential. The Nursery will have a rich and valuable time frame with the 2 years+ children therefore building a strong framework and foundation for the children's education.
- It is harder to find childcare.
- Children will be used to the school environment, should they choose to continue at the school.
- Children can enter Reception with the skills they need to assist them with learning to read, write and work with numbers. This will save on a lot of the 'catch up' work that we need to achieve with children coming to school from different Nursery settings.
- The school has the facilities, space and access to outside space to offer a wonderful nursery setting that other settings in the local area are unable to offer (personal opinion).
- Seashells Nursery is run by a qualified teacher and managed by a highly experienced deputy head teachers. This will ensure that Early Years curriculum on offer is delivered to an exceptionally high standard.
- Herne Bay Infant School is situated in a disadvantaged area, opening our doors to younger children can assist families in obtaining employment.
- The Nursery is an excellent provision and extending the age group will allow it to be more accessible to parents in our area. It will also make it a more viable business and able to provide a similar provision to the private nurseries in the area.
- Fully support this proposal so that nursery can continue to support current families, as well as offering opportunities for more children to attend a setting promoting excellent early year's education.

Governors

- Seashells Nursery has a provide track record of providing motivating and exciting learning environments where children are nurtured and challenged (Ofsted April 2016). The transition from Nursery to our own Reception has always been seamless and given children the best possible start to school. Extending the provision to two year olds can only further reinforce this and add to the children's opportunities.
- Parents wishing their children to start nursery at two would not need to transfer from another setting at three as is presently the case.
- Parents would appreciate the logistics of having their children on one site for ease of transportation.
- Extending provision would generate additional income to support the continuing existence of Seashells Nursery which may otherwise be a threat because of budget constraints on the main school budget. The Nursery is an asset to the school (supported by Age Related Expectation data) and to Herne Bay families and children but needs to be sustainable.

Against the proposal

Parents of children attending Herne Bay Infant School and/or Seashells Nursery

- Having two year olds at Seashells would adversely affect the offer at the Nursery.

- It feels very much like a pre-school where the children are preparing for school by being given more independence and starting to learn Phonics. I do not think many two year olds would be ready or interested in Phonics and are still learning potty training and needing lots of help.
- It is a very broad age range to cater for. It is hard to keep four year olds (who might nearly be five) engaged and interested as well as children half their age – everyone ends up compromising.
- If you have two year olds staying all day how would you facilitate naps?

Other Interested Parties:

- The proposal states that the age should be lowered so that local families can benefit by having to year old places at their local setting. However, offering only 4 places wouldn't really address this and as a manager of a nursery less than 5 minutes' walk from the school, we are able to offer two year old places to local families and we have space available for two year olds from September 16 – May 2017 which would indicate that there is no need for additional places to be offered.

Undecided about the proposal

Parents of children attending Herne Bay Infant School

- In principle I would support this provision if better access arrangements were made. Currently the entrance to the nursery/reception is very congested at pick up/drop-off times and it can be chaotic, especially for the children.
- My child previously attended 2-4 nursery it was lovely but child did not learn and develop as much as sibling who attended Seashells Nursery as I think they simply were not able to offer the same educational experience to the age range.
- Any activities had to be tailored towards younger children so that everyone could be included.
- I do not agree because children age two will required more care, nappies etc. which could affect the care and time given to the older children.
- Will there be more staff hired to care for these two year olds? My other child will hopefully be starting at Seashells in September and I would like my child to be in a more school like atmosphere not a toddler group.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Roger Gough,

Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education

DECISION NO:

For publication

Subject: Proposal to permanently change the age range of Herne Bay (Community) Infant School from 3-7 years to 2-7 years from September 2017.

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education I agree to:

- a) Authorise the Corporate Director – Children, Young People and Education to issue a Public Notice to permanently change the age range of Herne Bay Infant School from 3-7 years to 2-7 years from September 2017.

Should objections not already considered by the Cabinet Member when taking this decision be received during the public notice period, a separate decision will be required in order to continue with the proposal, to allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

Reason(s) for decision:

The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent (2017-21) sets out the local authority's duty to secure Free Early Education provision for Pre-school children, including places for 2 year olds;

In reaching this decision I have taken into account:

- The analysis of the views put in writing in response to the consultation;
- The views of the Area Education Officer and the Headteacher and Governing Body of Herne Bay Infant School;
- The Equalities Impact Assessment and comments received regarding this; and
- the views of the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee which are set out below

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications relating to this decision.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

To be added after Committee meeting

Any alternatives considered:

None

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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Signed

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Date