

OFFERTON HALL NURSERY AND DIAL PARK PRIMARY SCHOOLS' **PROPOSALS**

Report of the Corporate Director for People

1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Scrutiny Committee is asked to provide comments to the Cabinet on the feedback from the public consultation and to decide whether to publish related statutory proposals in relation to future nursery education provision at Offerton Hall Nursery and Dial Park Primary Schools.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Offerton Hall Nursery has been identified as requiring review following a proposal by the Nursery School in 2016 to improve sustainability of the provision. With upcoming changes to nursery education provision nationally, consideration must be given to the future viability and sustainability of the setting.
- 2.2. The setting has had a number of surplus places and a deficit budget in recent years. The proposal seeks to ensure the highest possible quality of education for Stockport's children whilst ensuring value for money by making best use of the funding available.
- 2.3. The Council reviews nursery provision with three principles in mind:
 - addressing areas of over- and under-supply,
 - the effective and efficient use of resources,
 - the offer of continuous provision from 2 to 11 years of age where possible.

3. PROPOSAL

- 3.1. The formal related proposals are to discontinue Offerton Hall Nursery School with effect from 31st August 2018 and to reduce the lower age limit of Dial Park Primary School to accommodate a nursery class from 1st September 2018.
- 3.2. There is no intention to re-locate the nursery class, which would remain in its current location and the Nursery School building would transfer to the management of the Primary School.
- 3.3. The proposals will enhance provision by creating a campus at the Half Moon Lane site which will provide high quality education for children from 2 to 11 years of age as part of the same school.
- 2.6 Under the proposals, there will be no apparent change for parents, or for children attending the nursery provision. The proposals will mean ongoing high quality and integrated education for pupils aged from 2 to 11. The overriding aim is to provide the highest possible quality of education for Stockport's children which, based on evidence, can best be achieved by developing the provision so that 2, 3 and 4 year olds can benefit from interactions with 'older' children.

- 2.7 There will be no change to the number of places available and the nursery provision will remain in its current building. There will be some changes to access the building and to improve links between the primary and nursery buildings. These will be developed with the school if the proposals go ahead.
- 2.8 As the Nursery School would close, management of the setting would transfer to the Governing Board of Dial Park Primary School. There is currently an overlap between some members of the existing Governing Boards which will assist with continuity.
- 2.9 Currently Offerton Hall Nursery School offers the following services:
- 24 part time 2 year old places
 - 117 part time 3 and 4 year old places (mornings or afternoons)
 - Breakfast club
 - 13 places for 3 and 4 year olds entitled to 30-hours; and from January 2018 there will be 26 places under the 30-hours offer.
- 2.10 Under the proposals there are no plans to change or reduce the current offer.

3 THE BENEFITS

- 3.1 Through the proposed change, the following benefits can be realised:
- Continued overall improvement to the quality of early education provision for Early Years Foundation Stage children;
 - Further support for the achievement of statutory targets around narrowing the attainment gap between children in areas of disadvantage and their peers in other areas of the Local Authority;
 - Continuity and consistency in the delivery of high quality early education for 2 to 11 year-olds with a clear focus on improving attainment and progress;
 - Continued effective support and challenge from the Local Authority to impact on improved standards at the end of Early Years Foundation Stage;
 - Compliance with Government requirements regarding sufficiency;
 - Making best use of limited resources.
- 3.2 The principle of 2 to 11 provision is based on sound educational research findings which confirm the value of high quality, maintained early years education but do not specify that this can only be delivered through nursery schools; rather, the research confirms that the best option is maintained provision with integrated childcare which is what will be achieved through the proposal.
- 3.3 HMCI's Early Years Annual Report 2015 notes:
- "We found that where schools and settings shared a site, were directly managed by one overarching leader or had entered into a professional network with others in the locality, expertise was shared effectively to allow all early years professionals to learn from the best."*

“We observed disadvantaged two-year-olds making the greatest progress when they were able to learn and play alongside their older early years peers. Where providers operated as an integrated provision, we found the youngest children benefited from hearing more sophisticated language and seeing personal, social and emotional behaviours in action from their more confident three-, four- and five-year-old friends. This type of provision was also successful because it replicated the incidental learning children encountered at home when interacting and playing alongside their older siblings. We found this type of integrated working organisation to be more prevalent in schools than pre-schools, where children of different ages tended to remain in their own ‘rooms’ for much longer periods of the day.”

“The older children themselves also benefited.”

- 3.4 Through the proposals, best use of resources can be made to improve further by joining up education for children aged from 2 to 11 across the campus. The good standard of effectiveness in the current reception class will provide better continuity for nursery pupils who then move into the Primary School.

4. QUALITY

- 4.1. Offerton Hall Nursery is an Outstanding setting and has been at its last four inspections. The Nursery School shares its outstanding practice with other settings as well as mentoring and training students. The exemplary early years pedagogy in the Nursery School should be maintained under the new management structure.
- 4.2. Dial Park Primary School is currently a Good school. The school was noted at its 2013 inspection as improving standards and EYFS children making good progress as they are well-taught. At the School's short inspection in 2017, this was followed by comment that pupils in the early years make a good start to their education and the number achieving a good level of development is increasing.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The Department for Education (DfE) introduced a new early years national funding formula (EYNFF) which took effect from April 2017 and provides the Local Authority a base rate level of funding at £4.30 per hour (national floor level) for both the universal free entitlement and the extended 30 hours offer (working parents only from September 2017).
- 5.2. The Council is responsible for administering the local early years single funding formula (EYSFF) that determines the funding (base rate and any supplements) allocated to each setting offering the universal and extended offer. The funding reforms further outline that from 2019/20 at the latest, all settings must be funded at the same base rate level including Nursery Schools; that are currently funded at a higher level to recognise their additional statutory costs (i.e. Headteacher). The DfE is providing supplementary funding for three years from April 2017 to maintain Nursery School funding at their current level, this is however not guaranteed beyond 2019/20 and the recent national consultation outlined further detail would be provided on options to identify efficiency savings and improve the long term sustainability of Nursery School provision.

- 5.3. Given the above position relating to Nursery School supplementary funding, statutory obligation to allocate a flat base rate level of funding to all settings by 2019/20 and the requirement for the Council to ensure best value and deliver the best outcomes for all children within its envelope of financial resources available, it is appropriate to assess the long term viability of individual settings as appropriate.
- 5.4. The proposed change of the Nursery School provision at Offerton Hall and Dial Park Primary School provides longer term financial security (i.e. senior management efficiency savings / affordability within the financial resources available), maintains a high quality Local Authority maintained nursery provision for two, three and four year olds on the same campus and achieves value for money when assessing costs and service delivery outcomes for the children.

6. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Due to the delegated arrangements for employment of staff by schools, the formal closure of the Nursery School would mean the Nursery School staff posts would be at risk. There would however be a requirement for nursery staff at the Primary School in order to ensure the high quality of provision at the Nursery School and the high quality is culturally embedded in those staff currently at the Nursery School.
- 6.2. In line with previous successful projects of this nature, consultation has been undertaken with the Governing Board of the Primary School to secure ring-fenced recruitment for staff affected by the proposal in the first instance should it go ahead.
- 6.3. From September 2017 the Primary School Headteacher took on interim management of the Nursery School following arrangements made between the Governing Boards of the Nursery and Primary Schools. Under the proposal the Headteacher of the Primary School would be Headteacher over the nursery class as the Nursery School would become a class of the Primary School.

7. CONSULTATION

- 7.1. Public consultation was undertaken on the proposals from 18th September 2017 to 3rd November 2017.
- 7.2. Hard copies of a consultation document and response form were sent to families of pupils at the Primary and Nursery Schools. Email copies were also sent to staff, governors, local schools, early years providers, applicants for Offerton Hall Nursery School places, diocesan authorities and trade unions. Local councillors and the local MP were also given the chance to express a view about the proposal.
- 7.3. During the consultation period, meetings took place with the Nursery School leaders and staff. Five drop-in sessions were hosted for families and other interested parties. The consultation was publicised via Have Your Say and by text directly to parents/carers.

- 7.4. In total, 30 people responded to the consultation. Only 1 person attended the consultation drop-in sessions and 29 responses were received via the Have Your Say web page or in writing.
- 7.5. Of the 30 responses, 17 supported the proposal and 10 did not support the proposal. Three respondents did not know.
- 7.6. The main themes arising from the consultation where comments were made in support of the proposals acknowledged that funding and inspection frameworks are now more aligned and that there can be better continuity from the combined management of the provision. Some respondents acknowledged that the proposals entail nothing more than a management change.
- 7.7. The main themes arising from the consultation where comments were made in opposition to the proposals included concerns about the closure of another nursery school, a loss of identity and expertise, the possible reduction in standards due to the loss of the Outstanding Nursery School rating. There was also concern that the Nursery School is not being given the opportunity to deliver the 30-hours offer and assess the impact on its sustainability.
- 7.8. Further information on the consultation feedback is detailed in the Consultation Feedback Summary Document at Enclosure 1. The consultation document is attached at Enclosure 2.
- 7.9. Whilst there have been some objections to the proposals, it is considered that the responses to themes arising from consultation align with those cited through the consultation.
- 7.10. Interim management arrangements were put in place for the Nursery School following a decision by the former Acting Headteacher to step down from the role.
- 7.11. In terms of the quality of provision, the Council has systems in place to ensure full support for maintaining and improving the highest quality for the setting, both during the interim period and following final decisions in relation to the proposals, regardless of the outcome.
- 7.12. With regard to financial concerns, the Council has a duty to review all Nursery provision at the appropriate times to ensure best value and efficiency in use of all public funds. The Nursery School itself had brought to the attention of the Council the difficulties it was facing in terms of its own sustainability and was open to consideration of options to protect the provision for the children of Offerton.
- 7.13. Combined with the early years reforms which require local authorities to provide a single base rate of funding to all settings by 2019/20 at the latest, with Nursery Schools funding levels protected via additional Nursery School supplementary funding provided by the DfE only initially, it is appropriate for the Council to ensure it can maintain a high quality, cost effective and sustainability nursery provision for the children in the Offerton area.

- 7.14. The proposals will deliver the aims and principles and will also retain staff expertise to ensure the school and nursery provision are effective and efficient. The proposals will also provide a more secure and cost effective use of the available grant provided to the Council given the uncertainty of when the Nursery School Supplementary grant funding will cease.
- 7.15. Further information on the impact of the proposals is detailed in the Equalities Impact Assessment at Enclosure 3.

8. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1. In view of the responses received and the positive work undertaken by the two settings to provide an integrated interim solution to nursery provision on the site, it is proposed to proceed with the publication of related statutory proposals.
- 8.2. The Scrutiny Committee is requested to consider feedback from the consultation and comment on the recommendation to the Cabinet under section 8.3 and 8.4 below.
- 8.3. The Cabinet is requested to approve the publication of related statutory proposals to:
- Discontinue Offerton Hall Nursery School with effect from 31st August 2018; and
 - Reduce the lower age limit of Dial Park Primary School in order to accommodate nursery provision with effect from 1st September 2018.
- 8.4. The Cabinet is requested to delegate authority for the final decisions to the Corporate Director, People, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education if there are no significant objections received during the formal representation period.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none

Additional Information Attached

Enclosure 1: Consultation Feedback Summary Document

Enclosure 2: Consultation Document

Enclosure 3: Equalities Impact Assessment

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Michelle Booth on Tel: 0161-218-1061 or by email on michelle.booth@stockport.gov.uk