

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services

Date of meeting:	15 th June 2009
Report of:	Barbara Hughes, Interim Head of Service for Children & Families
Title:	Ash grove Primary and Nursery School – Change of Age Range from 3-11 to 4-11

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval from the Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services to commence the statutory process to change the age range from 3-11 to 4-11 and close the maintained nursery unit at Ash Grove Primary School and Nursery, Belgrave Road, Macclesfield, Cheshire.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Officers commence the statutory process to change the age range from 3-11 to 4-11 and close the maintained nursery unit at Ash Grove Primary School and Nursery, Macclesfield.

3.0 Financial Implications for Transition Costs

- 3.1 The main financial implications at transition are the refurbishment costs of Ash Grove Primary to incorporate the transfer of Superkids, the existing local full daycare provider. The estimated costs for this are between £5-10k and will be met from the grants already approved to support the Local Authority's duty to secure a sufficiency of childcare.

4.0 Financial Implications 2009/10 and beyond

- 4.1 The change of age range would be likely to result in a saving to the authority as, based on the current projections, the maintained nursery would be unsustainable in 2010 and beyond and would require additional financial support to meet its expenditure costs.

5.0 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The Childcare Act 2006 has imposed two key duties on local authorities regarding childcare: -
- A duty to secure sufficient childcare to meet the needs of working parents and those training for work (Section 6 Childcare Act 2006).

- A duty to secure free early years provision for all three and four year old children (Section 7 Childcare Act 2006).

5.2 The Local Authority therefore has a duty to ensure that, so far as is reasonably practicable, parents in the area are able to access the childcare they need to enable them to work or to undertake training to assist them to obtain work. This proposal will meet this requirement.

5.3 As this is a statutory proposal, a decision needs to be made by members to change the age range. There are also lease implications as Superkids would need to be served notice on its existing premises and set up with a new lease at Ash Grove. The closure of the maintained nursery is likely to result in one redundancy situation for a support staff member.

6.0 Risk Assessment

5.4 If the future of early years education in the Ash Grove area is not secured through a reshaping of existing provision, there is a risk that the Local Authority may not meet its statutory duty to secure a sufficiency of childcare in the future.

5.5 If Ash Grove maintained nursery continues to operate beyond April 2010, there is a probable risk that additional finance will be required by the Local Authority to sustain it.

7.0 Background and Options

7.1 The proposal to change the age range of Ash Grove Primary School and Nursery from 3-11 to 4-11 years old is a prescribed alteration under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and therefore the prescribed statutory process set out in regulations must be followed.

7.2 Maintained Nursery Units currently receive funding based on 7/12 places and 5/12 occupancy. A single funding formula will be introduced in April 2010 for the maintained, private, voluntary and independent sectors where funding will be based wholly on occupancy. The low levels of occupancy at Ash Grove nursery would not attract sufficient income from April 2010 to sustain the provision.

7.3 In consultation with the School's Governing Body, officers from Children and Families have looked at various models of possible early years delivery in the locality.

7.4 A private day nursery, Superkids, currently operates from the Poolswood building on the St Barnabus site. Superkids are the only providers of full daycare for children aged 0-4 in the community. The amalgamation of St Edwards Primary School and St Barnabus Primary School from September 2009 will require temporary use of the St Barnabus site whilst building works take place at St Edwards, where

the new school will ultimately be accommodated. This will require the termination of the lease with Superkids.

- 7.5 The relocation of Superkids and the creation of full daycare at Ash Grove will require additional accommodation. The maintained nursery and reception class currently share the nursery room and outdoor area. The reception class will need to relocate within the school to provide sufficient space for full daycare in the current nursery room.
- 7.6 Ash Grove currently provides accommodation for a Study Support Centre for excluded pupils from across the area. The proposal to relocate the Study Support Centre to the Poolswood building will release the classroom back to the school for the reception class.
- 7.7 Should the Individual Portfolio Holder allow the consultation and publishing of statutory notices the formal consultation period on the change of age range will commence no later than 22nd June 2009 for six weeks. The consultation period should avoid the summer holidays. The School's summer holidays commence on 20th July 2009. Therefore, consultation will continue from 2nd September 2009 to 16th September 2009.
- 7.8 The formal statutory change in age range process will be carried out in 5 stages; Stage 1 Consultation (six week period), Stage 2 Publication of a statutory notice, Stage 3 Representation period (six week period to receive objections and representations), Stage 4 Decision- The Local Authority as the decision maker to aim for a decision in time for Stage 5, implementation on the 1st January 2010. This final decision to obtain approval for implementation (assuming there are no objections) will be taken by Cabinet on 1st December 2009. If there are objections, it is proposed to convene a meeting of the Cabinet School Organisation Sub-Committee in early December to make the final decision.
- 7.9 The Local Authority commenced an informal consultation with parents on the 11th May 2009 to gauge community response. Initially very positive feedback has been received from the community for this proposal.

8.0 Overview of Day One, Year One and Term One Issues

- 8.1 If the maintained nursery closes, the Local Authority and the new early years provider will need to work with the existing children and families to ensure a smooth transition.

9.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 9.1 The change of the age range at Ash Grove Primary School from 3-11 to 4-11 and the closure of the maintained nursery unit will enable Superkids to deliver full day care at Ash Grove and to ensure a longer

term viability of high quality early years provision in the Ash Grove area upon implementation of the single funding formula in April 2010. This proposal will ensure that the Local Authority continues to meet the childcare sufficiency requirements laid out in the Childcare Act 2006.

For further information:

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Background Documents:

None