

Report to: **Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability**

Date: **30 April 2018**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Lowering the age range at Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary School**

Purpose of report: **To seek Lead Member approval to publish statutory notices in respect of a proposal to lower the age range at Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary School to enable the governing body to take on management of the offsite Ditchling Pre-School Group, currently run by a Voluntary Management Committee.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) authorise the publication of statutory notices in respect of a proposal to lower the age range at Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary School from 4 to 11 to 2 to 11 with the proposal to take effect on 1 September 2018; and**
 - 2) delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to amend the proposals prior to their publication if required.**
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1 Background

1.1 Ditchling Pre-School Group is currently run by a Voluntary Management Committee for 2-4 year olds in the Scout Hut in Ditchling village. The Voluntary Management Committee is no longer able to provide the management structure the pre-school needs to continue to offer education and childcare places and has worked with Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary School to find an alternative solution. The governing body of the school wishes to lower the school's age range from 4 to 11 to 2 to 11. This will enable the school to provide nursery provision from the school site and maintain quality early years provision for children in the community, both now and in the future.

1.2 The aim of the proposal is to integrate, fully, nursery provision into the Early Years Foundation Stage within the school. The governing body wishes to ensure an offer high quality early education delivered by experienced and well-trained staff across the Early Years Foundation Stage. This will build on the work already done by the school to secure good outcomes for all children in the future. The proposal is in line with council strategy for the integration of nursery / school provision.

2 Supporting information

2.1 The governing body consulted between 11 September and 6 October 2017 on a proposal to lower the school's age range in order to take on management of the offsite Pre-School. The governing body consulted with staff, families of children at the school and pre-school, the local community and other interested parties.

2.2 By the close of the consultation period twelve responses had been received supporting the proposal to lower the school age range at Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary School to 2-11 to take on the management of the village pre-school. Only

one response raised concerns around the loss of internal and external space on the school site if the school was to offer early years provision on site. The governing body has set out how, through remodelling some spare and under-utilised spaces the nursery can be accommodated on site. The governing body will fund all of the capital works required to facilitate the move.

2.3 The governing body has undertaken thorough financial modelling to ensure the proposal is cost neutral and will not impact on the school budget.

2.4 The proposal to lower the school age range from 4 to 11 to 2 to 11 at Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary School to is supported by the Diocese of Chichester.

2.5 The intended date for implementation of the proposal is 1 September 2018.

2.6 The Council has followed a prescribed process established by the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013. In view of the feedback received during the consultation period it is proposed that a statutory notice is now published with regard to the proposal in accordance with the regulations.

2.7 It is intended that the notices would be published in the Sussex Express on Friday 11 May, 2018. A four week period of representation would follow, giving interested parties a further opportunity to comment on, or object to, the proposals.

2.8 The Council has a duty to determine each proposal within two months of the end of the representation period. It is anticipated that a decision will be taken at the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion and Special Educational Needs and Disability meeting on 26 June 2018.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 The proposal to lower the age range at Ditchling (St Margaret's) CE Primary School will help to build on work already done by the school in conjunction with the Pre-school's Voluntary Management Committee. This will help ensure a fully integrated Early Years Foundation Stage to help secure good outcomes for all children in the future. The proposal is in line with council strategy for the integration of nursery / school provision.

3.2 For this reason, the Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) authorise the publication of statutory notices in respect of a proposal to lower the age range at Ditchling CE Primary School from 4 to 11 to 2 to 11 with the he proposal to take effect on 1 September 2018; and
- 2) delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to amend the proposals prior to their publication if required.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

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