



SS John Fisher & Thomas More Catholic Primary School

A Voluntary Academy

"Journeying together with Jesus Christ, we learn to love and love to learn."



12th June 2019

Dear Stakeholders,

CONSULTATION TO CHANGE LOWER AGE LIMIT TO TWO YEARS

Following a positive, initial consultation with parents, the Local Governing Body at Ss John Fisher & Thomas More has taken a decision to seek the views of the wider community on making an application to the Department of Education to change the lower age limit at the school from 3 years to 2 years with effect from January 2020.

INFORMATION ABOUT PROPOSED PROVISION

The school intends to extend its lower age-limit to 2 years for up to 16 pupils on a part-time basis. It will initially offer 8 places to 2 year olds on a first come first service basis for 5 morning sessions a week, each lasting for three hours (9.00 – 12.00). This will be expanded to an additional 8 places for 5 afternoon sessions should demand increase. These places will either be funded through the government funding for eligible 2 year olds, or from a flat fee of £15.00 per session for those parents who are not entitled to free places.

The provision would be teacher-led and we are able to meet the required staffing ratios (1:4) using some existing teaching assistants already employed by the school.

RATIONALE

The school currently offers nursery places for 3 & 4 year olds to local pupils and has a Planned Admission Number of 52. During the last 2 years, the school has also been able to offer places to 'Rising Threes' which has had a significant impact on the attainment of these pupils (e.g. all of these pupils began nursery at age related expectations ("ARE") whereas, overall, baseline data indicates that only 1 in 10 nursery pupils are working at ARE on entry in Communication & Language, as well as in Reading. The school serves a local community where 48% of our school population are eligible for Pupil Premium funding. The Deprivation Quintile is 0.5, within the highest 20% nationally. 48% of our pupils are EAL with 14 out of 17 possible ethnic groups represented. Extending provision to 2 year olds would enable us to provide early intervention for the disadvantaged through our effective programmes for Speech & Language and Early Reading in order to close the attainment gap (2018 Phonics results in Y1 - 98%; 2019 Phonics projection - 95%). We would look to target families eligible for EY Pupil Premium, which is approximately half of our current school population. Such provision would also enable local families to be supported with child care so that parents could return to work. The fees for these families would always remain as competitive and affordable as possible; whilst at a level which would ensure the school is able to extend its provision on a break even basis.

Ss John Fisher & Thomas More, Catholic Primary School,
A Voluntary Academy

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BENEFITS

Benefits to the children and their parents

- The school would gain a greater knowledge of the children and their families, which would enable school to safeguard its children from an earlier age and signpost families to early intervention services such as family service workers
- The transition to main school would be "seamless", as parents and pupils would be familiar with school's ethos, policies and practices
- High quality, teacher-led provision, would ensure that the children make consistently high rates of progress in relation to their starting points and are extremely well prepared academically, socially and emotionally for the next stage of their education
- Affordable childcare may enable parents to return to work

Benefits to the school

- The school would actively promote the nursery with the aim of ensuring it feeds 45 children to the main school in order to maximise numbers on roll
- Senior leaders would provide strategic leadership on teaching and learning to ensure standards on entry are at least in line with national averages
- The school would be able to engage with parents before their children reach primary age, which will provide an opportunity to foster positive relationships

CONCERNS RAISED

During the initial consultation, whilst the majority of parents were in favour of the change, some questions were raised by parents about whether there was sufficient space and changing facilities to accommodate additional children. It should be noted that we have both the floor space and a sufficient number of toilets to accommodate an even higher number of children if we needed to expand in the future to meet demand. This change to nursery provision would be feasible without any major adaptations to the current nursery building. Any future alterations that would be required would be funded through reserve funds.

In order to proceed with these proposals, we would now like to start a formal consultation process with all stakeholders. We would welcome all your views, comments and questions, which you can address to:

- c.austin@st-johnfisher-st-thomasmore.manchester.sch.uk

As part of your response please include your name and indicate your relationship to our school e.g. parent, parishioner, parish priest, etc. The closing date for representations is 5pm on Wednesday 10th July 2019.

Yours faithfully

Mr Dominic Hemington
Headteacher

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