



Proposal to extend the age range of Tithe Farm Community Lower School from 3 – 9 years to 3 – 11 years to create a primary school.

Notice is given in accordance with section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Central Bedfordshire Council intends to make a prescribed alteration to Tithe Farm Community Lower School, Tithe Farm Road, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire LU5 5JB from 1 September 2013.

The proposal is to change the age range of Tithe Farm Community Lower School by extending it from a 3 – 9 years lower school to a 3 – 11 years primary school

This is to be implemented in two stages:

September 2013 - year 4 children will be retained at the school and become a new year 5.

September 2014 - Year 5 children will be retained at the school and become a new year 6.

The current capacity of the school is 300 in the main school plus provision for 78 part time nursery places. Following implementation the proposed capacity will be 420 places in the main school plus provision for 78 part time nursery places.

The current admission number for the main school is 60 for each year group. The proposed admission number will remain the same. Total capacity for September 2013 is expected to be 360 in the main school with 78 part time nursery places. Total capacity for September 2014 is expected to be 420 in the main school with 78 part time nursery places.

This Notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be obtained from: The Information Manager, Central Bedfordshire Council, Room DC2, Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable, Beds, LU6 1LF. It can also be viewed on the Council's website at <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations>

Within six weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to The Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford, Beds, SG17 5TQ.

Signed: Edwina Grant

Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services

Publication Date: 20 February 2012

Explanatory notes

It is proposed that extending the age range of Tithe Farm Community Lower School from 3 – 9 years to 3– 11 years to create a primary school will provide improved standards in years 5 and 6 and therefore at the end of Key Stage 2. National data shows that changing school may impact negatively on pupils' progress and may result in a lack of curriculum understanding, continuity, and assessment agreement. This proposal will remove the transition at the end of year 4.

The school can accommodate the additional year groups until July 2015 without the need for additional accommodation. From September 2015 the school proposes to change the use of the classroom currently used by the Neighbourhood Centre. From 2016 the school will need two further classrooms which are proposed to be provided by the school.

PROPOSALS FOR PRESCRIBED ALTERATIONS OTHER THAN FOUNDATION PROPOSALS: Information to be included in a complete proposal

Extract of Part 1 of Schedule 3 and Part 1 of Schedule 5 to The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools)(England) Regulations 2007 (as amended):

In respect of a Governing Body Proposal: School and governing body's details

1. The name, address and category of the school for which the governing body are publishing the proposals.

N/A

In respect of an LEA Proposal: School and local education authority details

1. The name, address and category of the school .

Tithe Farm Community Lower School
Tithe Farm Road,
Dunstable,
Bedfordshire.
LU5 5JB

Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation

2. The date on which the proposals are planned to be implemented, and if they are to be implemented in stages, a description of what is planned for each stage, and the number of stages intended and the dates of each stage.

The proposal will be implemented on 1 September 2013.
In September 2013 - year 4 children will be retained at school and become a new year 5
In September 2014 – year 5 children will be retained at school and become a new year 6

Objections and comments

3. A statement explaining the procedure for making representations, including —
- (a) the date prescribed in accordance with paragraph 29 of Schedule 3 (GB proposals)/Schedule 5 (LA proposals) of The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended), by which objections or comments should be sent to the local education authority; and
 - (b) the address of the authority to which objections or comments should be sent.

Within six weeks from the date of publication of this proposal (i.e. 2 April 2012) any

person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Beds. SG17 5TQ

Alteration description

4. A description of the proposed alteration and in the case of special school proposals, a description of the current special needs provision.

It is proposed that Tithe Farm Community Lower School will extend its age range from a 3-9 years lower school to a 3-11 years primary school.

School capacity

5.—(1) Where the alteration is an alteration falling within any of paragraphs 1 to 4, 8, 9 and 12-14 of Schedule 2 (GB proposals)/paragraphs 1-4, 7, 8, 18, 19 and 21 of Schedule 4 (LA proposals) to The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended), the proposals must also include —

- (a) details of the current capacity of the school and, where the proposals will alter the capacity of the school, the proposed capacity of the school after the alteration;

The current capacity of the school is 300 places in the main school plus provision for 78 part time nursery places. Following implementation, the proposed capacity will be 420 places in the main school plus provision for 78 part time nursery places.

- (b) details of the current number of pupils admitted to the school in each relevant age group, and where this number is to change, the proposed number of pupils to be admitted in each relevant age group in the first school year in which the proposals will have been implemented;

The school currently has an admission number of 60 at age 4+. This will not change.

- (c) where it is intended that proposals should be implemented in stages, the number of pupils to be admitted to the school in the first school year in which each stage will have been implemented;

There will be no change to the number of pupils to be admitted. However in September 2013 a new year 5 will be created and in September 2014 a new year 6 will be created to enable pupils, who would have otherwise have had to leave the school at the end of year 4, to remain.

- (d) where the number of pupils in any relevant age group is lower than the indicated admission number for that relevant age group a statement to this effect and details of the indicated admission number in question.

Currently all year groups are below the admission number of 60:

- Nursery – 25 (further intakes due in January and April)
- Year R – 30
- Year 1 – 30
- Year 2 – 30
- Year 3 – 28
- Year 4 – 28

Year R usually has more children than the Nursery as children from other nurseries join the school.

Currently the school has significant surplus capacity across all year groups. The increase in the number of year groups at the school will effectively reduce some of this surplus.

(2) Where the alteration is an alteration falling within any of paragraphs 1, 2, 9, 12 and 13 of Schedule 2 (GB proposals) /paragraphs 1, 2, 8, 18 and 19 of Schedule 4 (LA proposals) to The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended), a statement of the number of pupils at the school at the time of the publication of the proposals.

146 pupils in the main school plus 25 foundation stage pupils

Implementation

6. Where the proposals relate to a foundation or voluntary controlled school a statement as to whether the proposals are to be implemented by the local education authority or by the governing body, and, if the proposals are to be implemented by both, a statement as to the extent to which they are to be implemented by each body.

N/A

Additional Site

7.—(1) A statement as to whether any new or additional site will be required if proposals are implemented and if so the location of the site if the school is to occupy a split site.

N/A

(2) Where proposals relate to a foundation or voluntary school a statement as to who will provide any additional site required, together with details of the tenure (freehold or leasehold) on which the site of the school will be held, and if the site is to be held on a lease, details of the proposed lease.

N/A

Changes in boarding arrangements

8.—(1) Where the proposals are for the introduction or removal of boarding provision, or the alteration of existing boarding provision such as is mentioned in paragraph 8 or 21 of Schedule 2 (GB proposals)/7 or 14 of Schedule 4 to The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) —

- (a) the number of pupils for whom it is intended that boarding provision will be made if the proposals are approved;

N/A

- (b) the arrangements for safeguarding the welfare of children at the school;

N/A

- (c) the current number of pupils for whom boarding provision can be made and a description of the boarding provision; and

N/A

- (d) except where the proposals are to introduce boarding provision, a description of the existing boarding provision.

N/A

(2) Where the proposals are for the removal of boarding provisions or an alteration to reduce boarding provision such as is mentioned in paragraph 8 or 21 of Schedule 2 (GB proposals)/7 or 14 of Schedule 4 (LA proposals) to The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) —

- (a) the number of pupils for whom boarding provision will be removed if the proposals are approved; and

N/A

- (b) a statement as to the use to which the former boarding accommodation will be put if the proposals are approved.

N/A

Transfer to new site

9. Where the proposals are to transfer a school to a new site the following information—

- (a) the location of the proposed site (including details of whether the school is to occupy a single or split site), and including where appropriate the postal address;

N/A

- (b) the distance between the proposed and current site;

N/A

(c) the reason for the choice of proposed site;

N/A

(d) the accessibility of the proposed site or sites;

N/A

(e) the proposed arrangements for transport of pupils to the school on its new site; and

N/A

(f) a statement about other sustainable transport alternatives where pupils are not using transport provided, and how car use in the school area will be discouraged.

N/A

Objectives

10. The objectives of the proposals.

- To raise standards and improve outcomes for young people particularly at age 11, 16 and 18; Y6 data has been below 'floor targets' for three consecutive years.
- To ensure that particular attention is paid to groups of children who are underperforming and exceeding in years 5 and 6.
- To address the issues of surplus places in Houghton Regis.
- To provide stability, consistency and continuity for children in their primary years, through our ethos, curriculum, teaching and learning organization.
- To provide shared services between schools and to ensure continuity of learning and teaching on transfer at age 11 across Houghton Regis and All Saints Academy in Dunstable
- To provide equal access for all pupils to primary school education regardless of faith
- To ensure our schools are based around communities and their needs
- To provide specialist primary education for children in years 5 and 6
- To improve transition for children on transfer,
- To address issues of recruitment and retention of good quality staff

Consultation

11. Evidence of the consultation before the proposals were published including—
- (a) a list of persons who were consulted;
 - (b) minutes of all public consultation meetings;
 - (c) the views of the persons consulted;
 - (d) a statement to the effect that all applicable statutory requirements in relation to the proposals to consult were complied with; and
 - (e) copies of all consultation documents and a statement on how these documents were made available.

Informal consultation was carried out between 5 December 2011 and 3 February 2012

- (a) Parents/guardians of children currently attending Tithe Farm Lower School
- Staff at Tithe Farm Lower School
- The Chairs of Governors of all schools in Central Bedfordshire (including academies)
- The Head teachers of all schools in Central Bedfordshire (including academies)
- The Principal of Central Bedfordshire College
- All members of Houghton Regis Town Council
- All members of Dunstable Town Council
- All Central Bedfordshire Councillors
- Members of Parliament for South West Bedfordshire and Luton
- Pre-school providers in Houghton Regis,
- Pre-school providers' in Dunstable
- Luton Borough Council
- Pre-school providers in Luton between Poynters Road and the M1 motorway
- The Chairs of Governors of Luton schools between Poynters Road and the M1 motorway (including academies)
- The Head teachers of Luton schools between Poynters Road and the M1 motorway (including academies)
- All relevant Trade Unions for both Teaching and Support staff
- All church leaders within Houghton Regis
- Manager of Tithe Farm Neighbourhood Centre
- Internal (Central Bedfordshire Council) consultation in Early Years / SEN

A Public Meeting was held at the school on 18 January 2102.

(b) See Appendix A

(c) See Appendix B

(d)) All applicable statutory requirements in relation to the proposals to consult were complied with.

(e) A copy of the consultation document is available via the Central Bedfordshire Council <http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/consultations> .This consultation document was circulated to all of the people listed in section (a) and was also made available via the Councils publication 'Central Essentials' which is emailed weekly to head teachers and chairs of governors.

Project costs

12. A statement of the estimated total capital cost of the proposals and the breakdown of the costs that are to be met by the governing body, the local education authority, and any other party.

The school was originally built as a 2 form entry infant and junior school with shared kitchen and dining hall and overall capacity for 420 pupils.

- Recent building work and work the school had previously funded has updated the majority of the accommodation.
- The school currently has 3 surplus classrooms which can be refurbished and put back in to use.
- Excluding the Nursery classrooms the school will then have a total of 11 classrooms that could accommodate 30 pupils each.
- There is one further classroom that is currently in use by the Neighbourhood Centre this classroom and associated areas would need to return to the school to be refurbished by the school for September 2015.
- There will be a further need for additional classroom space in to take two further classes; the earliest this will be needed is 2016. The cost of additional build would be approx £220,000 based on current costs for new build. This could be either to add additional classrooms for main school pupils or to look at new build for EYFS part of school.
- The school will budget towards the costs for new build over the next 3-4 years and also look in to possible funding for EYFS provision to enable provision for 2 year olds and eventually from birth. (giving 0 – 11 provision)

13. A copy of confirmation from the Secretary of State, local education authority and the Learning and Skills Council for England (as the case may be) that funds will be made available (including costs to cover any necessary site purchase).

N/A

Age range

14. Where the proposals relate to a change in age range, the current age range for the school.

The current age range is 3-9 years across the main school plus part time nursery provision.

Early years provision

15. Where the proposals are to alter the lower age limit of a mainstream school so that it provides for pupils aged between 2 and 5—

- (a) details of the early years provision, including the number of full-time and part-time pupils, the number and length of sessions in each week, and the services for disabled children that will be offered;

The school already caters for pupils aged 3-9 with 300 places in the main school plus 78 part time nursery places. The provision for nursery aged pupils will not change.

- (b) how the school will integrate the early years provision with childcare services and how the proposals are consistent with the integration of early years provision for childcare;

The school currently has an admission number of 60 at age 4+. This will not change.

- (c) evidence of parental demand for additional provision of early years provision;

N/A

- (d) assessment of capacity, quality and sustainability of provision in schools and in establishments other than schools who deliver the Early Years Foundation Stage within 3 miles of the school; and

N/A

- (e) reasons why such schools and establishments who have spare capacity cannot make provision for any forecast increase in the number of such provision.

N/A

Changes to sixth form provision

16. (a) Where the proposals are to alter the upper age limit of the school so that the school provides sixth form education or additional sixth form education, a statement of how the proposals will—

- (i) improve the educational or training achievements;
(ii) increase participation in education or training; and
(iii) expand the range of educational or training opportunities for 16-19 year olds in the area;

N/A

- (b) A statement as to how the new places will fit within the 16-19 organisation in an area;

N/A

(c) Evidence —

- (i) of the local collaboration in drawing up the proposals; and
- (ii) that the proposals are likely to lead to higher standards and better progression at the school;

N/A

(d) The proposed number of sixth form places to be provided.

N/A

17. Where the proposals are to alter the upper age limit of the school so that the school ceases to provide sixth form education, a statement of the effect on the supply of 16-19 places in the area.

N/A

Special educational needs

18. Where the proposals are to establish or change provision for special educational needs—

- (a) a description of the proposed types of learning difficulties in respect of which education will be provided and, where provision for special educational needs already exists, the current type of provision;

There are no proposals to establish or change provision for SEN

- Tithe Farm Lower School feels that changing age range will have no negative impact on the current good SEN provision.
- The school will be able to continue with the good and supportive SEN provision already in place and pupils will benefit from this for a further two years.
- Increasingly more vulnerable children find it difficult to adapt to the disruption of a larger school, different organisation and different approaches to teaching and learning
- The primary approach of mixed ability classes supports children of this age; they benefit from the stimulus and support of others, and have opportunities to excel in other areas thus boosting their self-esteem.
- We have the expertise, resources and teaching methodologies to support children who find learning hard.
- We have the facility to teach children in groups other than their registration groups

- (b) any additional specialist features will be provided;

N/A

(c) the proposed numbers of pupils for which the provision is to be made;

N/A

(d) details of how the provision will be funded;

N/A

(e) a statement as to whether the education will be provided for children with special educational needs who are not registered pupils at the school to which the proposals relate;

N/A

(f) a statement as to whether the expenses of the provision will be met from the school's delegated budget;

N/A

(g) the location of the provision if it is not to be established on the existing site of the school;

N/A

(h) where the provision will replace existing educational provision for children with special educational needs, a statement as to how the local education authority believes that the new provision is likely to lead to improvement in the standard, quality and range of the educational provision for such children; and

N/A

(i) the number of places reserved for children with special educational needs, and where this number is to change, the proposed number of such places.

N/A

19. Where the proposals are to discontinue provision for special educational needs—

(a) details of alternative provision for pupils for whom the provision is currently made;

N/A

- (b) details of the number of pupils for whom provision is made that is recognised by the local education authority as reserved for children with special educational needs during each of the 4 school years preceding the current school year;

N/A

- (c) details of provision made outside the area of the local education authority for pupils whose needs will not be able to be met in the area of the authority as a result of the discontinuance of the provision; and

N/A

- (d) a statement as to how the proposer believes that the proposals are likely to lead to improvement in the standard, quality and range of the educational provision for such children.

N/A

20. Where the proposals will lead to alternative provision for children with special educational needs, as a result of the establishment, alteration or discontinuance of existing provision, the specific educational benefits that will flow from the proposals in terms of—

- (a) improved access to education and associated services including the curriculum, wider school activities, facilities and equipment with reference to the local education authority's Accessibility Strategy;
- (b) improved access to specialist staff, both educational and other professionals, including any external support and outreach services;
- (c) improved access to suitable accommodation; and
- (d) improved supply of suitable places.

N/A

Sex of pupils

21. Where the proposals are to make an alteration to provide that a school which was an establishment which admitted pupils of one sex only becomes an establishment which admits pupils of both sexes—

- (a) details of the likely effect which the alteration will have on the balance of the provision of single sex-education in the area;

N/A

- (b) evidence of local demand for single-sex education; and

N/A

- (c) details of any transitional period which the body making the proposals wishes specified in a transitional exemption order (within the meaning of section 27 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975).

N/A

22. Where the proposals are to make an alteration to a school to provide that a school which was an establishment which admitted pupils of both sexes becomes an establishment which admits pupils of one sex only—

- (a) details of the likely effect which the alteration will have on the balance of the provision of single-sex education in the area; and

N/A

- (b) evidence of local demand for single-sex education.

N/A

Extended services

23. If the proposed alterations affect the provision of the school's extended services, details of the current extended services the school is offering and details of any proposed change as a result of the alterations.

The school currently provides a breakfast club and a range of after school clubs and will be able to provide more extended services including workshops, counselling provision and parental support through enhanced staffing and working collaboratively with other schools.

Need or demand for additional places

24. If the proposals involve adding places—

- (a) a statement and supporting evidence of the need or demand for the particular places in the area;

In response to parental concerns, the proposal will add an additional 60 places per year group for years 5 and 6. This will enable pupils to remain in the school should parents wish this thereby increasing choice and diversity across the area.

- (b) where the school has a religious character, a statement and supporting evidence of the demand in the area for education in accordance with the tenets of the religion or religious denomination;

N/A

- (c) where the school adheres to a particular philosophy, evidence of the demand for education in accordance with the philosophy in question and any associated change to the admission arrangements for the school.

N/A

25. If the proposals involve removing places—

- (a) a statement and supporting evidence of the reasons for the removal, including an assessment of the impact on parental choice; and

The proposals will increase provision across the area and increase parental choice.

- (b) a statement on the local capacity to accommodate displaced pupils.

N/A

Expansion of successful and popular schools

25A. (1) Proposals must include a statement of whether the proposer considers that the presumption for the expansion of successful and popular schools should apply, and where the governing body consider the presumption applies, evidence to support this.

(2) Sub-paragraph (1) applies to expansion proposals in respect of primary and secondary schools, (except for grammar schools), i.e. falling within:

(a) (for proposals published by the governing body) paragraph 1 of Part 1 to Schedule 2 or paragraph 12 of Part 2 to Schedule 2;

(b) (for proposals published by the LA) paragraph 1 of Part 1 to Schedule 4 or 18 of Part 4 to Schedule 4

of the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended).

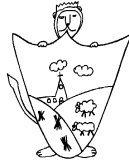
N/A

Appendix A

Headteacher
Mrs S J Surgey
B.Ed (Hons) M.A. NPQH

Telephone (01582) 865047
Fax (01582) 865057

Tithe Farm Lower School



Tithe Farm Road
Houghton Regis
Bedfordshire
LU5 5JB

tithefarm@cbc.beds.sch.uk

Where "pupils thrive in their learning & personal development"

MINUTES FROM PUBLIC MEETING REGARDING PROPOSED AGE RANGE CHANGE

WEDNESDAY 18TH JANUARY 6-7:30pm

Meeting opened at 6:05

Attendees – signing in sheet attached.

Welcome and Introduction by Chair of Governors Mrs Susan Goodchild

Mrs Goodchild welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for coming along. She then introduced Mrs Surgey (Head teacher), Nicola Chinnery (Deputy Head teacher), Sarah Clarke (Clerk to Governing Body and Minute taker) all members of staff and all members of Tithe Farm's Governing Body.

Presentation by the Head teacher Mrs Shelah Surgey (see attached presentation)

QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

Elaine Fairclough, Head teacher Thomas Whitehead Lower School -Parental choice is good and not one model just to follow parents may wish a child to go to middle school.

Julia Lawson, Head teacher, Thornhill Lower School - Thornhill totally agrees with what Mrs Surgey had said. Felt the key things is that the rest of the country is in a two tier system and we wish to follow that and when you look at standards, CBC is below the rest of the country.

Tom Waterworth, Principal All Saints - Believes this is a very exciting time and loves what the presentation said about improving standards all along and giving children the skills they need for life. Most of our children come from Houghton Regis. Stability and continuity is not present at the moment, it is messy. All Saints is very excited about the possibilities and leading on curriculum changes. Very excited about re writing the curriculum in years 5,6 7 8 and we want to work as equal partners with primary schools in Houghton Regis. All Saints success depends on the individual success in schools in our community. Transition is as a shared experience. All Saints would love to work with schools on this and we are currently awaiting the outcome of our submission to have our age range changed. There is a new building at All Saints. All Saints is very keen to work together to make a great future for our students and we need joined up thinking. The proposal has full support from All Saints they are committed to working as a partnership and to make this area a beacon for primary schools across the country.

A Parent Support Advisor wished to raise the point regarding SEN (special educational needs) for pupils. The advisor has a son with Tourette's, who, when diagnosed, found it very difficult to move to middle school and the parents would very much have liked to leave their child at a primary school for longer where the staff and children knew him well. Teachers here know the children and can recognise the traits and help the children.

Shelah Surgey, Head teacher Tithe Farm - SEN children find the move to middle school very difficult and are at risk of exclusion. They can find moving from class to class difficult. SS feels SEN children will benefit from a primary education until the age of 11. All children are individuals and we are able to treat them accordingly. Our teachers have all but half a day with their pupils and know them very well.

Lindsey Johnson, Head teacher Hawthorn Park The statistics for permanent exclusion show that the vast majority are in years 5 or 6 or in year 9 i.e. at transition periods. They often end up in pupil referral units. Jigsaw is a primary provision in a local school.

Kim Ireland, Town Councillor -Wished all schools every success with their proposal.

Close of meeting by Chair of Governors Mrs Susan Goodchild

Mrs Goodchild closed the meeting by advising everyone that this was the 3rd consultation of the 4 meetings scheduled. She urged people to attend the remaining meeting to send a strong message that the schools parents and community of Houghton Regis will support this process.

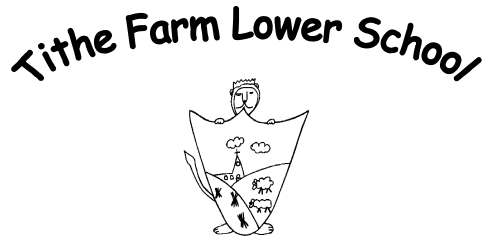
Finally Mrs Goodchild thanked everyone for coming.

Meeting closed at 6:40

Appendix B

Headteacher
Mrs S J Surgey
B.Ed (Hons) M.A. NPQH

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Where "pupils thrive in their learning & personal development"

REPORT ON THE INFORMAL CONSULTATION CONDUCTED WITH REGARD TO A PROPOSAL TO EXTEND THE UPPER AGE RANGE OF TITHE FARM LOWER SCHOOL, TITHE FARM ROAD, HOUGHTON REGIS, BEDFORDSHIRE, LU5 5JB FROM 3 – 9 YEARS TO 3 – 11 YEARS

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

The purpose of this document is to provide information and report on the informal consultation relating to a proposal to extend the upper age range of Tithe Farm Lower School from 3 – 9 years to 3 – 11 years to create a full primary school.

OBJECTIVES OF PROPOSAL

- To raise standards and improve outcomes for young people particularly at age 11, 16 and 18; Y6 data has been below 'floor targets' for three consecutive years.
- To ensure that particular attention is paid to groups of children who are underperforming and exceeding in years 5 and 6.
- To address the issues of surplus places in Houghton Regis.
- To provide stability, consistency and continuity for children in their primary years, through our ethos, curriculum, teaching and learning organization.
- To provide shared services between schools and to ensure continuity of learning and teaching on transfer at age 11 across Houghton Regis and All Saints Academy in Dunstable
- To provide equal access for all pupils to primary school education regardless of faith
- To ensure our schools are based around communities and their needs
- To provide specialist primary education for children in years 5 and 6

- To improve transition for children on transfer,
- To address issues of recruitment and retention of good quality staff

PROCESS OF INFORMAL CONSULTATION

Informal consultation period ran from 5th December 2011 to 3rd February 2012. The consultation consisted of a consultation document, a meeting for staff and unions and a public meeting.

Consultation documents were sent to the following people:

Parents/guardians of children currently attending Tithe Farm Lower School

Staff at Tithe Farm Lower School

The Chairs of Governors of all schools in Central Bedfordshire (including academies)

The Head teachers of all schools in Central Bedfordshire (including academies)

The Principal of Central Bedfordshire College

All members of Houghton Regis Town Council

All members of Dunstable Town Council

All Central Bedfordshire Councillors

Members of Parliament for South West Bedfordshire and Luton

Pre-school provision in Houghton Regis,

Pre-school provision in Dunstable

Luton Borough Council

Pre-school provision in Luton between Poynters Road and the M1 motorway

The Chairs of Governors of Luton schools between Poynters Road and the M1 motorway (including academies)

The Head teachers of Luton schools between Poynters Road and the M1 motorway (including academies)

All relevant Trade Unions for both Teaching and Support staff

All church leaders within Houghton Regis

Manager of Tithe Farm Neighbourhood Centre

Head of Early Intervention & Prevention, CBC

Head of School Support, CBC

The consultation document was also available on the Central Bedfordshire Learning Portal and publicised in Central Essentials.

A meeting for staff and Trade Union officials was held on Wednesday 18th January 2012 between 4pm and 5pm. All staff and Trade Union officials were given prior notice of this meeting in writing.

A public meeting was held on Wednesday 18th January 2012 between 6pm and 7:30pm. This meeting was publicised by flyers and on the Central Bedfordshire Learning Portal, details were also in Central Essentials.

Pupils in Years 1 – 4 were also consulted during discussion time.

RESPONSES TO INFORMAL CONSULTATION

Tithe Farm Lower School received 146 written responses to the consultation.

Overall - collated responses.

1a) I support the proposed changes to the age range at Tithe Farm Lower School.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
128	5	6	0	7	0

1b) I support the timescale plan of the age change at Tithe Farm Lower School

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
113	18	8	1	5	0

***1 with no response box chosen*

95 parent/guardian responses

1a) I support the proposed changes to the age range at Tithe Farm Lower School.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
90	2	2	0	1	0

1b) I support the timescale plan of the age change at Tithe Farm Lower School

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
77	13	4	1	0	0

14 responses from other schools (Governing Bodies and schools as organisations)

1a) I support the proposed changes to the age range at Tithe Farm Lower School.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
9	1	2	0	3	0

1b) I support the timescale plan of the age change at Tithe Farm Lower School

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
9	1	2	0	3	0

36 Other (including MP, Councillors, school staff (individuals) and Unions)

1a) I support the proposed changes to the age range at Tithe Farm Lower School.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
29	2	2	0	3*	0

* includes a Councillor who actually agrees with the proposal but will not support it as Houghton Regis Lower are not being allowed to consult.

1b) I support the timescale plan of the age change at Tithe Farm Lower School

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
27	4	2	0	2	0

**1 with no response box chosen

The meeting for staff and union officials was attended by all teaching staff, some support staff and John Monkhouse from the NUT. Other Union officials sent their apologies.

The public meeting held on Wednesday 18th January was attended by 34 people.

Pupil discussions were held on Monday 16th January.

RESPONSES TO POINTS RAISED THROUGHOUT INFORMAL CONSULTATION

WRITTEN RESPONSES

POSITIVE RESPONSES

PARENTS

Many parental responses indicate that they believe the change should have happened sooner, that schools in other parts of the country do better and this would put the school in line with this. Parents expressed a belief that the stability offered by the lower schools would enable their children to achieve so much more and reach their full academic potential.

A parent commented that “Tithe Farm has very high teaching standards and focuses on the children as individuals not as statistics and they believe children would benefit from staying at the school until they are 11”.

Further comments related to the transition from Lower school to Middle school being a huge leap with the culture and environment of the middle school classroom being a huge shock for their child and that with some children barely having reached the age of 9 this was too much for them emotionally. Other parents commented that children would not have to go through the change to middle school which “does not seem to be having much positive effect on children’s performance”. Parents further expressed a wish that their children would hopefully only have to change school once.

SCHOOLS (RESPONSES FROM ORGANISATIONS)

Positive responses from schools (Kings Houghton Middle School, Mill Vale Middle School, All Saints Academy, Houghton Regis Lower, St. Christopher’s Lower, Meppershall Lower, Campton Lower, Thornhill Lower, Hawthorn Park Lower, and Thomas Whitehead Lower) indicate that there is support for a change to primary schools which they believe will have a great impact on children’s learning, progress and achievement.

E Fairclough (Head teacher, Thomas Whitehead) expressed the belief that intervention to support children with basic literacy and numeracy skills in Years 5 and 6 is best undertaken by practitioners who are familiar with this learning which lies in the primary model.

Tom Waterworth (Principal, All Saints Academy) commented “It is essential that we move to a 2 tier system of education in Central Bedfordshire if student outputs at GCSE and Level 3 are to be improved. If we are aspirational for the children in our area then it is important that the age range for this school is raised to 11 and that the age range for All Saints changes from 13-18 to 11-18. Making this change will enable us all as a family of schools to refocus our energies on the middle

years of education and it will be a great and exciting opportunity to completely re-write the curriculum and programmes of study for children aged 8 to 13. I fully support the proposals and urge everyone to pull together to make this change happen within the timescale.”

L Johnson (Head teacher, Hawthorn Park) felt that good primary provision for Houghton Regis would enhance the life chances for all pupils and would provide further opportunities for joint working to enhance educational provision.

King's Houghton Chair of Governors has responded “that as a governing body we would be generally supportive of a change to a two phase system with primary and secondary schools. In selecting an academy sponsor we have been mindful of our wish to strengthen our partnerships with all the other local schools. We are keen to develop a collaborative approach to provide a coherent provision for educational needs across the community of Houghton Regis. We would support this proposal and look forward to working with your school to enable it to move forward.”

OTHER RESPONSES

Positive responses from several other respondents commented on the schools very close working relationships and understanding of our families; this was seen as a great strength of the school which was not replicated in Middle school. Key Stage 2 would be completed in one school and the responsibility for the progress would rest with the primary school.

A teacher from another area in CBC commented “That as an experienced teacher in both two tier and three tier systems (both lower and middle schools) I am delighted by these proposals. At nine children are not ready to move to a secondary style of learning, which is what middle schools are. Years 5 and 6 should remain in a smaller environment with a topic based curriculum which has a purpose and inherently practical approach.”

Another teacher felt that a further two years in Tithe Farm would enable pupils to become emotionally and behaviourally more mature in an environment where they felt secure. Further comments related to the lack of readiness for the secondary style of education which pupils currently receive at age 9 when they transfer to Middle school and a belief that they would then be mature enough for secondary schooling at age 11.

Another teacher commented that “the low starting point of many of the pupils on entry to school was also felt to be a significant factor in their poor transition to middle school; it was felt that pupils need the extra two years to consolidate their learning and feel confident before moving on to a secondary model of education.

Councillor Peter Williams commented on the strengths of the leadership team and the improvements in the educational standards that they had achieved at the school. They further commented that the very close working relationship between the schools was a great strength which was already impacting on the education of pupils.

Town Councillor, Mrs K Ireland commented that it would also help address the problem of changing schools mid Key Stage; an issue which we believe has a negative impact on our pupils.

Councillor Susan Goodchild further commented that CBC standards are not as good as they should be and that they believed, with the quality of the Lower schools in Houghton Regis, allowing them to alter their age range would support the council's improvement strategy. She felt that it should be recognised that Lower schools are one of CBC's strengths and that a change in age range would support closing the gap in standards achieved by all young people and vulnerable groups which is a priority in the Local Authority's Children and Young People's Plan.

Mrs J Babiak, former Head teacher of Thornhill Lower and Tithe Farm Lower, and current Vice Chair of Governors at Kings Houghton Middle School responded saying that she "strongly supports the proposal on all educational and social grounds stated in the consultation document."

Andrew Selous MP expressed his "delight that there has been so much agreement among so many Houghton Regis schools about school reorganisation in the town"

CONCERNS RAISED

PARENTS

One parent raised a concern that the amount of playground space available would not be sufficient; however Tithe Farm has 2 large playgrounds, extensive fields and a separate Nursery outside area. It also meets all the requirements under The Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999. It was also previously a Primary School.

SCHOOLS (RESPONSES FROM ORGANISATIONS)

Robert Bloomfield Academy and Leighton Middle, neither of which is in Houghton Regis or Dunstable, commented on schools acting in isolation and the impact it could have on other areas e.g. Leighton Buzzard. They were not aware, even though it is clearly stated, that there is very

close working between schools, which is evident by the support at the Public Meeting from the local schools, in Houghton Regis and that there was a firm commitment to extend this to all schools where pupils may transfer to.

Mill Vale Middle School, who are currently consulting to become a Primary academy, has responded that they wished us well and had no objection to the change of age range but felt that the consultation document made comments that could have been misleading as it refers to middle schools rather than particular schools. Whilst we acknowledge the comments Mill Vale made we can only comment on schools we feed to. At the time of the initial proposal the schools that Tithe Farm children feed to were either graded satisfactory or were in an OfSTED category.

Parkfields Middle School's response was confusing as it had responded to three questions, our consultation only has two. It could in part relate to Tithe Farm however in the main it related to the consultation of Thornhill Lower School who have answered issues raised in full in their report. They also asked if we would "be able to provide the same or better educational facilities that Years 5 and 6 currently get at the middle school." We don't believe primary aged children (5-11) need science labs and technology workshops to achieve well; which can be evidenced through primary schools in the rest of the country. We believe that curriculum delivery is paramount to enable all pupils to have opportunities to become successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens. This will be achieved through an engaging, challenging and purposeful primary curriculum that better meets the learning styles and needs of our pupils. Our proposal outlines in detail how we would achieve this. They also say that that "despite the expressed desire of the parent body to retain the three-tier system, this is a back door approach to moving to the two-tier by default." Parental support in Houghton Regis is overwhelmingly supportive of the lower schools becoming primary schools, as is evident by the consultation responses; therefore this point is not pertinent to our consultation as it is not about our parents. Nor can it be "through the back door" given the many public processes we are going through.

A member of staff from King's Houghton Middle commented "that parents like the extended facilities a middle school can offer, that large numbers of children mean you can teach in ability groups and that SEN are best met by a specialist team and you can only be funded by a large demand of varying needs." The best primary age trained teachers, which Tithe Farm has, provide a full range of organizational methods to promote the very best teaching and learning; the use of ability group teaching is part of this however it is not the only method that should be used in the very best practice. Tithe Farm Lower along with the other lower schools has an outstanding reputation for meeting the needs of pupils with Special Educational Needs and disabilities (SEND). Indeed OfSTED complemented Tithe Farm on the way SEND pupils' needs were met

within the mainstream classroom. Our staff are very well trained and access the relevant support services to ensure SEND pupils and their families receive the right support. Tithe Farm already has a breakfast club and many extra curricular activities, through partnership working with other local schools we believe we can provide a full range of services for the families of Houghton Regis pupils.

Town Councillor Tony Swain responded that whilst they think there should be a two tier structure of education they felt unable to support our proposal because they were of the understanding that Houghton Regis Lower School was not included and it was therefore discriminatory and unfair. Whilst the school acknowledges this, and would have liked all schools to be in a position to consult, it could also be viewed that there is already an “unfair” system within Houghton Regis as St Vincent’s is already a primary school. With schools that become academies also planning to change their age ranges (Mill Vale, Hadrian and St Christopher’s) there is going to become different choices and more diversity of schools for parents to choose from and different structures will exist.

The Head of Early Intervention and Prevention (CBC) raised concern over the school expressing the need for the classroom and toilet area currently used as part of Tithe Farm Neighbourhood Centre to revert back to the school for September 2016. This is the earliest that the area would be required and it is the school’s belief that this could be addressed. New contracts are currently being issued by CBC which will run until March 31st 2015 it is the intention of the school to be in a position to jointly tender along with Hawthorn Park to run this service in collaboration with the other schools. It is our belief that we could manage the service and accommodation to enable the area in discussion to be put back in to use as part of the school accommodation.

Union concerns related to local structures, partnership working and to any impact there may be around staffing at both Tithe Farm and any schools that may see pupil numbers change as a result of the age range change. Timothy Ramsden (NASUWT) commented that “Should the change proceed, we believe a committed, strong and experienced governing body is vital to support all staff through the period of change in times that are tough for the education service generally. We therefore look to the governors’ determination, within the normal processes of election to governing bodies, to assure Head teachers and all staff of their support throughout the process.” We have a very strong and committed Governing Body that fully supports this proposal and are confident that it can be delivered successfully.

REPONSE TO POINTS RAISED BY THE STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT)OF KINGS HOUGHTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

We received a response from the above who strongly disagreed with the proposal. Surprisingly this was in contrast to the response received from King's Houghton Governing Body who have given us their support for the proposal.

This comments "The lower schools tell us they do not examine the children using QCA tests but use pupils assessment or APP. We in turn assess the children using APP and also using QCA." As lower schools we use a wide range of assessments that includes formal QCA tests, APP and in school and cross school moderation to ensure accuracy of assessment and future target setting. These assessments have been validated by Local Authority moderation at EYFS, Year 2 and Year 4 and the data is passed to King's Houghton. Therefore the assumption that pupils from lower schools have never completed formal tests before attending King's Houghton is factually untrue.

The SLT also made comments about Luton schools. Our proposal is concerned with improving outcomes for pupils in Houghton Regis at Year 6 and would be specifically tailored to those needs.

The SLT refers to the "huge leap middle schools need to make with years 5 and 6". Primary schools should not need to make this 'huge leap' in Years 5 and 6 because pupil progress will continue across the whole school from EYFS to Year 6 and there will be consistency in teaching learning and assessment.

The SLT comments "Lower schools are no sharing maths resources and ideas with us as we have asked, and we have worked for several years now on the same Literacy scheme with Hawthorne park and this has been very successful." As a result of their Ofsted inspection, (July 2011) The Head teacher contacted us in September 2011 to enquire about the resources and scheme we used in maths. We responded promptly and my Deputy Head arranged a meeting with the Deputy Head at Kings Houghton and for us to support a Year 5 teacher. We have dates in our diary for numeracy lessons to be observed and for us to support with planning and teaching in year 5.

The SLT states "Lower schools have not provided us with APP documentation- despite requests. We hope that will be redressed this year." All Lower schools provided APP documents to Kings Houghton in 2011 we also send a wealth of other evidence to substantiate these judgements. Unfortunately Kings Houghton use the secondary APP documents to assess their primary age pupils, we use the primary documents.

The SLT states “The system is stable at the moment in Houghton Regis.” The education provision in Houghton Regis is undergoing change in line with the rest of the country with the setting up of academies free schools and alternative provisions. This is highlighted by the fact that Kings Houghton are themselves being ‘academised’ by Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust. The newsletter to parents commented, “The conversion to Academy status will be as a middle school but the Academy will adapt in the future to suit the needs of the community.”

The SLT comments “All families have the choice to send their child to a primary school by crossing Poynters Road – the Barnfield Academy is closer than the All Saints Academy. If parents want to they can access the other system.” This is factually incorrect as Barnfield Academy is a secondary school, not a primary school.

The SLT states ‘We also understand that ASA has not managed to get permission to become a secondary school. If it does have this permission there would not be enough forms of entry for year 7.’ The decision for All Saints to become a secondary school has not yet been made therefore this statement is factually incorrect. Never the less there are other options within the surrounding area for the children to change schools at age 11. The SLT has already suggested the children could attend Barnfield Academy and has expressed her own interest in becoming a secondary school when she applied to CBC. The SLT also states, ‘we can see a way forward if we were to become a secondary provision’.

The SLT feels the status quo could be maintained through strong partnership working and continually makes references to close partnership working. They say ‘As a middle school we have made massive efforts to work alongside our lower school colleagues. The overwhelming feeling we get from them is distrust and an unwillingness to work with us’.

All schools in Houghton Regis and All Saints Academy in Dunstable have a very strong working relationship and previously had good working relationships with KHMS as well. We feel that the ‘status quo’ described by the SLT is not good enough for our children. This is reinforced by the unacceptable results for children at key stage 2.

There are fundamental differences between the SLT and the lower schools in the understanding of what constitutes good transition; we believe transition should focus on continuing the learning journey for our pupils through a shared curriculum, assessment and teaching methodology. Unfortunately the current practices pay insufficient attention to these crucial areas.

PUBLIC MEETING

There were no concerns raised against the proposal at the public meeting. There was support for the proposal in that it would give parental choice (E Fairclough, Head teacher, Thomas Whitehead Lower). It would put us inline with the vast majority of the rest of the country and a belief that it would impact on results which for CBC are low (J Lawson, Head teacher Thornhill Lower). Tom Waterworth (Principal, All Saints Academy) fully supported everything the presentation said about improving standards all along and giving children the skills they need for life; he further commented that All Saints is very excited about the possibilities of the changes. He was very excited about re writing the curriculum in years 5, 6, 7 and 8 wants to work as equal partners with primary schools in Houghton Regis. He stated that All Saints success depends on the individual success of the schools in our community and transition being a shared experience. He further commented that All Saints would love to work with schools on this and was very keen to work together to make a great future for our students through joined up thinking. He concluded by saying that the proposal has the full support from All Saints and they are committed to working as equal partners to make this area a beacon for primary schools across the country.

Issues around SEND were raised with both parental and professionals commenting that they felt children's needs could be better met at a primary school than in a middle school during Years 5 and 6. The issue of exclusion was discussed, with L Johnson (Head teacher, Hawthorn Park Lower) commenting that the statistics for permanent exclusion show that the vast majority are in years 5 or 6 or in year 9 i.e. at transition periods with pupils often ending up in pupil referral units (PRU). There is already an anomaly in that the Jigsaw is a primary provision in a local lower school.

Parents, Town Councillors and Central Bedfordshire Councillors who were present fully endorsed the proposed changes.

PUPIL COMMENTS

Pupils in Years 1, 2, 3 and 4 were overwhelmingly positive about the possibility of staying on at Tithe Farm until they are 11.

Majority said they would like to stay at Tithe Farm until they were 11. They said that they think their school is friendly and they know the teachers well. They would enjoy having more children in the school and they could have more responsibility as they got older. They enjoy the topic work they are doing. Most children felt they would learn much more and do better if they could stay at

Tithe Farm until they were 11 years old.

Pupils raised concerns that there would be less help for them at middle school, that there would be fewer rewards, that they would get lost, might be bullied, would get detention and that they didn't feel ready to have lots of different teachers in different classes. They liked the idea of walking to middle school on their own so that they could go to the shops and they liked the idea of having lockers.

REVISIT AND REVIEW OF ORIGINAL PROPOSAL IN THE LIGHT OF INFORMAL CONSULTATION

STANDARDS

Since our original proposal was submitted 2011 Key Stage 2 results have been published and show how poorly schools in CBC are performing compared to schools nationally. OfSTED (May 2010) commented that "All groups of pupils thrive in their learning and personal development in this good and improving school.....Attainment in reading is above national expectations in Year 4 while that in writing in and mathematics is in line. The school is ambitious to further raise attainment in writing and mathematics to match that in reading. At the heart of the good progress all groups of pupils make in reading, writing and mathematics, is the effective teaching and an interesting and enjoyable curriculum." 2011 data shows that we have now achieved this.

Tithe Farm has very well trained Primary teachers who are trained general teachers of all subjects, as well as specialists in their chosen subject area; they are trained in how children learn and they are trained to teach children phonics and how to develop reading skills. More than half of the teaching staff at Tithe Farm already has relevant experience of teaching the upper primary years.

Primary age children need to be taught by teachers who understand how the essential basic skills are learnt. They need to not only have the basic skills but also the confidence to use them and consolidate them before they experience secondary education. Indeed the majority of middle schools, most of which no longer exist, across the country were deemed primary, extending primary provision until 12 or sometimes even 13 years of age.

As Head teacher, I have 15 years experience of externally marking Key Stage 2 English SATs, with the last 10 years as a Team Leader supervising a team of ten other markers. I understand the standards that children need to achieve and the levels they need to be working at.

CBC acknowledges that the fall in Key Stage 2 standards is a priority for improvement. (CBC meeting 15.12.11) It further acknowledges that Dunstable and Houghton Regis has pockets of particularly poor school performance and measures are currently underway to improve this issue, including failing schools being encouraged to find a credible academy sponsor (CBC meeting 15.12.11)

More of the same is just not good enough for our pupils. If we maintain the same system we are failing to provide children and families from one of the most deprived wards in the country with the opportunity to develop the good standards of education and support that they need to improve their life chances. We believe that we have the capacity to improve the life chances of all children up to the age of 11 and beyond by providing them with a curriculum and teaching methodology that is more suited to their learning needs. We have always been committed to providing the very best for all children in our care and look forward to working in close partnership with other schools to ensure that this continues throughout the primary school years of a child's life.

SCHOOL CAPACITY

The school has the capacity to appropriately accommodate the further two years on current and maximum predicted school numbers until at least September 2016. The Governing Body has a clear commitment and vision to fund any changes that may be needed now or in the future. Working with other schools will be key to ensuring there are sufficient places in the local area, and for individual schools, for all those families who want to send their children to them.

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities)

Our provision for pupils with SEND is outstanding and is fully embedded in to the ethos of the school as a whole. OfSTED (May 2010) commented that "All groups of pupils thrive in their learning and personal development in this good and improving school It is an area of strength where our expertise and knowledge of different types of SEND is used to meet the needs of all our pupils. As a school we regularly update our training and expertise, meet and have a close working relationship with other agencies i.e. SALT, ELC. We also support families through often difficult decisions and offer them support with coping with their child's SEND needs. We ensure our pupils and their families' access the groups and facilities offered at Hawthorn Park and through our PSA offer excellent family and community support.

TRANSITION

Parental concerns were around the number of transition points impacting on their children. This proposal would reduce number of transition times and also allow pupils to transfer at end of Key Stage. It would also give pupils time to become emotionally ready. Even where there was disagreement it was agreed that transition has an effect on education and well being.

It remains a firm commitment from the school to work with all schools that pupils transfer to at any age, in order to address transition issues.

WORKING TOGETHER WITH OTHER SCHOOLS

The strength of the partnership working between schools in Houghton Regis is already very evident. Public meetings and consultations were fully supported and our proposal endorsed by Houghton Regis Lower School Head teachers, All Saints Academy and members of King's Houghton Middle School Governing Body. We work closely together and this close working has been enhanced by the processes we going through to try and achieve full primary status. Having worked at Tithe Farm since May 2001, in a variety of roles, it has not always been a smooth partnership however this is the most exciting and vibrant time there has been in terms of partnership working.

EXTENDED SERVICES

As a school we provide many extended school activities already, including a Breakfast Club and a variety of after school activities. We hope that this can be further extended and really benefit our community. Though a concern was addressed about the position of the Neighbourhood Centre, we believe that good partnership working among the schools and the centre would enhance all services within our community.

Outcomes of the Staff and Union Representatives Meeting: 18th January 2012

The meeting for staff and union officials was attended by all teaching staff, some support staff and John Monkhouse NUT. Other Union officials sent their apologies.

John Monkhouse Would there be any redundancies at this school?

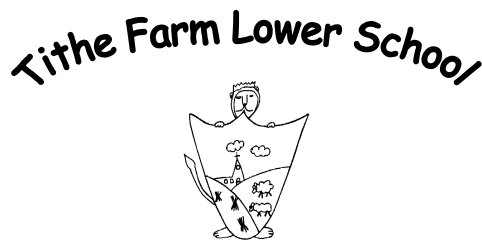
A. Our current and predicted school capacity was explained to John and this clearly indicates that we would need more staff not less.

John Monkhouse If there were redundancies at say the middle school would you consider employing them here?

A. We would apply the same criteria to any applicant for a position at the school and positions would be offered based on meeting the criteria and suitability for the position.

Headteacher
Mrs S J Surgey
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Where "pupils thrive in their learning & personal development"

GOVERNING BODY STATEMENT

STATEMENT FROM TITHE FARM LOWER SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY REGARDING THE PROPOSAL TO EXTEND THE AGE RANGE OF TITHE FARM LOWER SCHOOL FROM 3-9 YEARS to 3-11 YEARS.

Tithe Farm Governing Body met at **11am on Monday 6th February** to look at the responses to the informal consultation, to discuss the draft report and to prepare this statement. The following statement was written jointly and agreed on unanimously by the Governing Body.

The Governing Body of Tithe Farm Lower School consists of a mixture of parent governors, staff

governors, community governors and local council governors.

We (the Governing Body) fully support the proposal to extend the age range of Tithe Farm Lower School from 3-9 years to 3-11 years. We believe the current three tier system is failing the children of Houghton Regis. The Governing Body plays an active role in the school and we are fully aware of the excellent achievement and progress made by the children of our school.

Our children currently move on to middle school at age 9, in the middle of a Key Stage. This is not a natural point to move to a new school with different teaching practices and into a completely new environment, with unfamiliar routines, teaching staff and peers. Data from our robust, standardised assessment shows that when children leave Tithe Farm, the majority are achieving well and many have reached or progressed above the LA expectations and national expectations. However by the end of Key Stage 2 (Year 6) pupil achievement has fallen dramatically.

National league tables (2011) show Central Bedfordshire Key Stage 2 results are well below expected national levels. Within Central Bedfordshire, our closest middle school, the school to which the majority of our children move to has the lowest percentage of children reaching the expected level for English and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2.

We find it unacceptable that our children are being sent to a school where only 40% of children reach the national expectation for these core subjects, the lowest percentage in Central Bedfordshire. Recent data from the Department of Education shows that children who enter secondary education (Year 7) at lower than expected levels, rarely 'catch up'.

Following the informal consultation process the Governing Body of Tithe Farm Lower acknowledges the overwhelming support from parents and the wider community for the proposed change.

This proposal is not something the Governing Body has entered into lightly. The Governing Body of Tithe Farm Lower School is wholeheartedly committed to support the proposed age range change from 3-9 years to 3-11 years. We realise there may be testing times ahead, however we are strongly committed to making this change happen for the benefit of our children, families and ultimately for the wider community. We have every confidence in the leadership of the Head teacher and her senior leadership team to manage the change. We believe this change will go a long way towards helping the children of Houghton Regis develop into well rounded, well educated young people who are equipped both educationally and emotionally to move onto the next stage of their educational journey.

Therefore we request that this proposal be allowed to proceed to the Statutory Notice stage.

Signed on behalf of the Governing body

Chair of Governors.....Mrs Susan Goodchild

Date.....