



Proposal to extend the age range of Thornhill 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 Thornhill Community Lower School, Grove Road, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire LU5 5PE from 1 September 2013.

The proposal is to change the age range of Thornhill 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 200 in the main school plus provision for 78 part time nursery places. Following implementation the proposed capacity will be 210 places in the main school plus provision for 60 part time nursery places.

The current admission number for the main school is 40 for each year group. From September 2013 the proposed admission number will be reduced to 30 for each year group. Total capacity for September 2013 is expected to be 200 in the main school with 60 part time nursery places. Total capacity for 2014 is expected to be 210 in the main school with 60 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 Thornhill 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 by reverting one classroom currently used as a parents' room and 'after school club' for an interim period. In the longer term, when funds become available, the school would consider a permanent extension to the school to replace these facilities.

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 .

Thornhill Community Lower School
Grove Road
Houghton Regis
LU5 5PE

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 Thornhill 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 200 places in the main school plus provision for 78 part time nursery places. Following implementation, the proposed capacity will be 210 places in the main school plus provision for 60 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 proposal is for Thornhill Community Lower School to reduce their current admission number from 40 to 30. The number of children being admitted has been decreasing year on year and the reduced admission number will enable the school to accommodate the additional children in years 5 and 6.

- (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;

From September 2013 it is proposed that the schools admission number be reduced from 40 to 30. However from 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.

It is proposed that the school will reduce its intake from 40 to 30. The school currently has 131 pupils on roll plus 39 part time nursery pupils. The current number on roll in year R, Year 2 and Year 3 are below the existing admission number and the proposed admission number. The number on roll in Year 1 and Year 3 are marginally above the proposed admission number (30) but well below the current admission number (40)

(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.

131 pupils in the main school plus 39 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 provide stability, consistency and continuity for children in their primary years, through the school's 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 the issues of surplus places in Houghton Regis.
- 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 Thornhill Lower School

Staff at Thornhill Lower School

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

The Head teacher 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

All relevant Trade Unions for both Teaching and Support staff

All church leaders within Houghton Regis

Internal (Central Bedfordshire Council) consultation in SEN

A Public Consultation Meeting was held at the school on 11 January 2012

(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.

No initial capital costs will be incurred. The school can currently accommodate 200 pupils, but one classroom is now used as a parents' room and After school club. It is proposed that this room will be reverted back into a classroom for an interim period but in the longer term, when funds become available, the school will consider the provision of replacement facilities.

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 the 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 200 places in the main school plus 78 part time nursery places. The provision for nursery aged pupils will be reduced to 60. This will still enable the demand for spaces to be met.

- (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;

As existing

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

See 15(a) above

- (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
Children with special needs or those who are particularly vulnerable will particularly benefit for the following reasons:

- 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.
- The school has the expertise, resources and teaching methodologies to support children who find learning hard.

The school has the facility to teach children in groups other than their registration groups. This has already proved very successful in school for reading and in KS2 maths and this would continue to support the school's more vulnerable learners

- (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.

There will be no alterations to the extended services the school offers. The school will continue to offer before and after school care for all children 4+ although alternative arrangements will need to be made within the school for parents/after school club. The proposal will give the opportunity for joint extended school provision across the local schools reflecting the needs of the wider community and the aspirations of the 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 at Year 5 and Year 6. Whilst this will slightly reduce capacity elsewhere within the school, the proposed lower admission number (30) is more reflective of the current demand for places. Currently the school has approximately 70 surplus places across the main school.

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

See above. Similarly all schools within the area will be working closely together to ensure

that pupils can be accommodated within the wider community of schools.

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

Houghton Regis
Bedfordshire
LU5 5PE
Telephone & Fax:
01582 863516



Head Teacher:
Mrs Julia Lawson

Email:
thornhill@cbc.beds.sch.uk

MINUTES OF CONSULTATION EVENING AT THORNHILL LOWER SCHOOL

The public meeting held on Wednesday 11th January was attended by 40 people.

Welcome by Julie Clatworthy, Chair of Governors

Presentation by Julia Lawson, Head teacher

Questions and Discussion:

1. Councillor Goodchild – Introduced herself – CBC, Chair of Governors at Tithe Farm and Governor at King's Houghton Middle School
Excellent presentation! Shows the uniqueness of our Community. How are you going to take parents along collectively? I want this to go ahead. Whoever the sponsor of middle school is we would want them to work alongside other schools.

Mrs Lawson replied: *'Our parents are very keen for us to extend our age range to 11 and are absolutely fully supporting this. Over the years we have built up a good relationship with our parents, they trust us and work with us well. Our parents tell us they want their children to stay with us until 11. If parents were not supportive of this change we wouldn't be applying for it.'*

2. Parent - *"I am scared for my son when he comes to leave Thornhill at aged 9 because he's not ready and I would be much happier for him to stay until he's 11. I have complete confidence in Mrs Lawson."*
3. Thornhill Y4 teacher and SEN Co-ordinator. *"Every year parents have come back for our support after their children have left."*
4. Parent *"I want my son to stay here 'til he's 18!"*
5. PSA and ex Parent - *"My son has SEN and he found transition very difficult because of his Tourette's. He would have benefited from having an extra 2 years here."*
6. Julia Lawson- *"we know our children and we understand their needs, most children have been with us since nursery. We have the resources and the teaching expertise to support children in Years 5 and 6 they need a primary approach to teaching and learning and our resources and teaching techniques are especially beneficial for children with special needs. One of our children who have a Statement of Special Need is staying at Thornhill for another year because his parents do not feel that the Middle School environment is appropriate for him."*

7. Tom Waterworth – Principal, All Saints Academy
 - *Inspired by JL's passion*
 - *Tremendous opportunity to re-write education*
 - *Provides stability, consistency and continuity*
 - *Leading curriculum innovation for years 5 & 6*
 - *Current system does not work*
 - *All Saints staff, governors and parents support this proposal*
8. Lindsey Johnson- Head teacher, Hawthorn Park Lower School- *"We should use parents' ideas to help us to shape the curriculum for children in Years 5 and 6 and to help us build on children's confidence.*
9. Parent- *"Communication between parents and school is key."*
10. Parent - *"You don't get that at King's Houghton."*
11. Councillor Goodchild - *"It is all about raising aspirations, I agree with Lindsey."*
12. PSA - *"For the last 2/3 years we (PSA) have been running transition workshops and we have had lots of concerns from parents regarding communication between middle school and parents."*
13. Parent Governor at Thornhill - *"The communication between my child's middle school and us is good."*
14. PSA - *"They do communicate, just in a different way."*
15. Thornhill Lower School staff member - *"Lower school parents are able to 'catch' their child's teacher in the morning or after school and that's as easy in middle schools, lower schools are more 'open' and there is daily contact for parents".*
16. Parent - *Will you organise holiday activities at different schools?"*
 Julia Lawson - *'Yes, it is our aim to work together to provide more extended services for our children and their families.'*
 Parent - *"That's a good idea; it gives children the chance to meet other children, some of whom they will meet at their next school."*
17. Councillor Goodchild - *"I concur with everything that's been said this evening."*

Julie Clatworthy closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their contribution. The meeting closed at 6.45 p.m.

Appendix B

Grove Road
Houghton Regis
Bedfordshire
LU5 5PE

Telephone & Fax:
01582 863516



Head Teacher:
Mrs Julia Lawson

Email:
thornhill@cbc.beds.sch.uk

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ON A PROPOSAL TO EXTEND THE UPPER AGE RANGE OF THORNHILL LOWER SCHOOL, GROVE ROAD, HOUGHTON REGIS, BEDFORDSHIRE, LU5 5PN 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 Thornhill 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 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 the issues of surplus places in Houghton Regis.
- 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 Thornhill Lower School
Staff at Thornhill Lower School
The Chair of Governors of all schools in Central Bedfordshire (including academies)
The Head teacher 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
All relevant Trade Unions for both Teaching and Support staff
All church leaders within Houghton Regis
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 11th January 2012 between 4pm and 5pm. All staff and Trade Union officials were notified in writing of this meeting.

A public meeting was held on Wednesday 11th January 2012 between 6pm and 7:30pm. This meeting was publicised by, letters, 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

Thornhill Lower School received 134 written responses to the consultation.

Overall Collated Responses:

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

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
114 (85%)	9 (7%)	4 (3%)	3 (2%)	4 (3%)	0

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

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
106 (79%)	15 (11%)	5 (4%)	3 (2%)	4 (3%)	1 (0.75%)

1c) I support the change in admissions number for Thornhill Lower School

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
106 (79%)	14 (10%)	7 (5%)	4 (3%)	2 (1.5%)	1 (0.75%)

81 responses from parents/guardians

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

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
76 (94%)	5 (6%)	0	0	0	0

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

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
68 (84%)	11 (14%)	1 (0.75%)	1 (0.75%) This parent wants it sooner	0	0

1c) I support the change in admissions number for Thornhill Lower School

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
68 (84%)	10 (12%)	3 (2%)	0	0	0

The comments from parents and guardians were overwhelmingly positive:

I feel this is a good idea for children to stay at Thornhill for longer as this would stop them being uprooted at an age where some children can't cope with the transition' Parent

I fully agree that children's needs are met in primary school and that a change half way through Key Stage 2 is not in the best interests of the children. Parent

My son struggled on moving to middle school. I had to take him into school every day and leave him sobbing his heart out. He just wasn't ready for the larger school. My younger son will benefit if Thornhill can get the age range extended and I for one am all for the extended age range for Thornhill. Lower/middle School Parent

It is such a pity that you didn't try to change the age range of Thornhill early because this is our last year in this school. Parent

We moved here from a two tier system and my eldest children were greatly disadvantaged by going to Kings Houghton, their grades dropped significantly. I welcome the change; my only hope is that Mrs Lawson will be fully supported during the change. Lower/middle School parent

I believe strongly that it would be in the child's best interests to finish Key Stage 2 before moving to another school. Parent Governor

I feel that my children will have their needs met more effectively staying at Thornhill. Lower/middle School Parent

This proposal is the best idea for the local children as it will make learning more stable for them. With the hard work everyone puts in they are more than capable to handle the proposed changes. Parent

I strongly believe this is a very good idea. Parent

I strongly support this as I found it difficult for my son to get used to the vast change in school. Lower/middle School Parent

Thornhill is a very lovely supportive school for my children and I will be very sad when my daughter has to leave in September, but I hope there is a decision to turn the school from lower to primary in time for my son to benefit. Parent

22 Responses from other Schools

1a) I support the proposed changes to the age range at Thornhill Lower School

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
9 (40%)	2 (9%)	4 (18%)	3 (13%)	4 (18%)	0

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

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know

9 (40%)	2 (9%)	4 (18%)	2 (9%)	4 (18%)	1 (4.5%)
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1c) I support the change in admissions number for Thornhill Lower School

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
9 (40%)	2 (9%)	4 (18%)	4 (18%)	2 (9%)	1 (4.5%)

31 Responses from 'Other' (including individuals, school staff, Governors, MP)

1a) I support the proposed changes to the age range at Thornhill Lower School

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
29 (94%)	2 (6%)	0	0	0	0

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

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
29 (94%)	2 (6%)	0	0	0	0

1c) I support the change in admissions number for Thornhill Lower School

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
29 (94%)	2 (6%)	0	0	0	0

RESPONSES TO POINTS RAISED THROUGH INFORMAL CONSULATATION

This is linked to our original proposal

PARENTAL CHOICE

Leighton Middle School: *Changing the age range of the school will de-stabilise the educational provision in the surrounding area.*

There is currently an emphasis on providing parents with choice. Government initiatives include conversion to Academy and the setting up of 'Free Schools'. In the surrounding area of Houghton Regis a number of schools have already expressed a real interest in changing their age range and All Saints Academy have applied to become a secondary school 11-18. Kings Houghton Middle School have agreed to be sponsored by The Greenwood Dale Foundation Trust and have informed parents that they 'will adapt in the future to suit the needs of the community.' No children from Thornhill Lower School currently transfer to Leighton Linlade for their middle school education.

Fairfield Park Lower School: *Concern re impact in the local area and mixed economy for parents.*

Houghton Regis already provides a choice for parents through St Vincent's Primary School and some of our middle school pupils transfer to Barnfield Academy at the end of Year 6. Our parents overwhelmingly support this change because they feel their children will have a better quality of education by remaining in Thornhill Lower School.

'I agree that our children are sometimes struggling in their first years at middle school and feel that this would be the ideal solution to ensure continued support for all levels of ability and to remain at Thornhill until 11' Middle School Parent

'I would have loved my son to be at Thornhill longer, as he was so not ready for that big change'. Parent

The transition from lower to middle is not up to a good enough standard on behalf of the middle school. The staff at Thornhill put the children's needs first and I feel they will achieve their potential by staying for a further two years' Middle and Lower School Parent

'Year 5 children find it challenging to change schools and I am not in any way surprised that the attainment levels for this age group show this' Middle and Lower School Parent

While feedback is reported as positive currently from parents in terms of intending their children stay to the end of Year 6 in the primary school, this might change when the alternative is an academy. Timothy Ramsden NASUWT

Our parents tell us they want the best for their children. Our recent Ofsted was very positive and our children achieve very well at Thornhill. Why would the educational provision be better in an academy?

Despite the expressed desire of the parent body to retain the three tier system this is a back door approach to move to the two-tier by default Parkfields Middle School

Our responses clearly indicate that this is not the desire of our parent body. All our parents who responded to the consultation are in favour of extending our age range to 11. We have followed the guidance provided by the Local Authority

Our Proposal States that we aim to 'provide increased confidence within the local community that the education system is geared to local need and reflects parental wishes'

TRANSITION

Central Partnership for Learning: *Parental feedback confirms that Year 5 is a suitable point of transfer.*

The parental feedback at Thornhill Lower School is that 100% of our questionnaires returned support deferring the age of transfer to 11. We believe that the demography of Houghton Regis is deteriorating and more children and families are falling into the Acorn category of 'Hard Pressed' which means that increasingly parents and children require more support and nurture. As a result of being "Hard Pressed" more children are behind in their PSE development at age 9. This is evidenced by the very low PSED scores recorded on entry to the Foundation Stage. They remain immature and emotionally behind and for a large majority, the transition at age 9 is too challenging. They are ill-equipped to move to a larger setting based on a secondary model of teaching and learning.

Our Proposal states;

Transition is a major key to successful lifelong learning. In order to achieve successful transition for all there needs to be an open, honest 2 way partnership that is fostered by mutual respect and professionalism.

Good transition is fundamental to the success of this proposal; all schools are fully committed to work with all future providers having agreed processes for transfer at age 11 so that the school journey becomes seamless. In order to achieve this seamless transition we will ensure that there is:

1. a shared curriculum, teaching and delivery across all phases
2. shared support & expertise across phases
3. the sharing of information as a two way process
4. the sharing of data, target setting and assessments where there is a mutual trust of judgements and information
5. a commitment to joint working over transition period including post transition
6. leadership of transition that is positively led by senior leaders from all schools
7. pupil involvement in their planned transition

BEHAVIOUR

Central Partnership for Learning: *'There could be implications for behaviour management if Years 5 and 6 created a negative impact on younger children's learning and initial school experience'*.

Our proposal clearly outlines our view on behaviour. We will aim to reduce the number of fixed term and permanent exclusions for children in these year groups because behaviour is very well managed in our school. This is due to established behaviour management strategies that are successful for the following reasons:

- we have in depth knowledge of our children and families
- we make it a priority to build excellent relationships especially with our more vulnerable families;
- we use a wide range of support mechanisms (PSAs, external agencies, play therapy, small group work, one to one support)
- we have a consistent approach to behaviour management that is known and understood by all
- Smaller environment and favourable staffing ratio means that the school can continue to meet the needs of children and are able to address behaviour issues
- 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
- 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

- **Hawthorn Park currently manages the Jigsaw Extended School Provision for excluded pupils Y1-6. So sharing of expertise and resources will be enabled within the local community.**
- **There are positive effects on groups that tend to under-perform; vulnerable learners, low achievers etc. because the school knows these children well, increasingly children are not ready for transfer at age 9 because their emotional and maturity needs are not well developed**

STANDARDS

Mill Vale Middle School, who are currently consulting to become a primary school themselves, felt that the proposal document was misleading and that there were 'inaccuracies' because we refer to all middle schools rather than a specific middle school. They felt the inaccuracies lay within the following areas, Y6 data, our comments about underperforming and exceeding groups of children in Years 5 and 6, recruitment and SEND.

Central Partnership for Learning: *There are no guarantees that by changing age ranges standards will dramatically improve.*

The vast majority of our children transfer to Kings Houghton Middle School. In 2008 over a quarter of our children achieved Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics. Three quarters of our children were meeting the standards expected for their age. Two years later only 2% of Year 6 pupils achieved Level 4 in English and mathematics. This clearly shows that transferring at 9 is severely affecting children's progress in years 5 and 6.

Our Proposal States;

Transferring schools in the middle of a Key Stage often results in lack of curriculum understanding, continuity, assessment agreement and ownership of key stages. By providing stability, consistency and continuity for children in their primary years, and through our ethos, curriculum, teaching and learning organisation We have the expertise in early intervention, resources and teaching methodologies to support children who find learning hard.

SCHOOL CAPACITY

Parkfields Middle School: *What impact does the reduction of places have on those pupils who will be denied a place?*

Our proposal clearly states that one of our aims is to address the issue of surplus places in Houghton Regis. Our school is undersubscribed by 69 places from YR to Y4 and 39 part-time places in nursery.

Our admission for 2012 is currently 25, but this can change dramatically within the year.

Next year 2012-13 we predict our numbers to be: 125 school, 31 part-time nursery

The LA predictions show a steady decrease in numbers over the next 5 years: 2012: 128 children; 2014: 111 children; 2015: 93 Children, 2016: 89 Children.

We do not envisage that the reduction in places will have a major impact on pupils.

CURRICULUM

Parkfields Middle School: *Will Thornhill Lower 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 (9-11) need science labs and technology workshops to achieve well.

Our proposal states;

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.

We acknowledge there will be a significant impact on our schools in the delivery, resourcing and teaching of some specialist subject areas, and we appreciate that the curriculum for Years 5 and 6 will need careful planning. We will do this by:

- **Following the national curriculum that sets out clearly the core knowledge and understanding that all children should be expected to acquire in their primary years**
- **Visiting other good/outstanding primary schools regionally and nationally to see good practice, planning, teaching & learning and pastoral care**
- **Planning the curriculum for Key Stage 2 and training with other schools**
- **Working with St Vincent's Primary School**
- **Sharing good practice, resources, facilities and expertise with partnership feeder schools**

Teaching styles within upper Key Stage 2 will promote opportunities to further develop learning & thinking skills and independence through an enquiry based and reflective teaching style which will meet the needs of a range of learners. As a network of schools we aim to lead on curriculum innovation in years 5 and 6. CPD will focus on innovative teaching & learning and in giving teachers the confidence to support all children to progress.

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY

There were no concerns raised with regard to SEND

..... with his autism and ADHD he has benefitted from Thornhill's methodology and we hope that this will remain' Parent

The school has excellent understanding of children with special needs and I feel that with the system the way it is not fair to the children and I believe that extending it to 11 years would be beneficial to both of our children. Parent

I currently have a son in Year 4 with SEN. I have visited a fair few middle schools and they seem that they cannot really provide for these children...they are very much senior schools. Parent

Our Proposal states;

We feel that changing age range will have a positive impact for pupils with SEND and for vulnerable learners e.g. LAC, building on from the current good practice already established in our schools.

- **We have the expertise in early intervention, resources and teaching methodologies to support children who find learning hard.**
- **We believe that our professional knowledge of how children learn will enable us to provide effective intervention from those practitioners who do this best.**
- **We will continue with the good and supportive SEND provision already in place and pupils will benefit from this for a further two years.**
- **Excellent work with families is already established to support all vulnerable children, SEND, LAC,**
- **Over the years, we have established excellent relationships with other professionals in order to support pupils with SEND and their families and will continue this for upper Key Stage 2 pupils. E.g. local specialist provision**
- **Children with SEND receive very effective support and as a result make good and outstanding progress in our schools**
- **We aim to maintain and share specialist staff already employed by our schools to support SEND**
- **We aim to support Gifted & Talented pupils within our schools and to consider the role played by feeder schools**
- **All schools benefit from highly skilled, experienced SENCo's.**
- **The two way sharing of information at transition will support more positive outcomes for pupils with SEND and vulnerable learners.**
- **Additional expertise within the Jigsaw centre will support pupils with SEND**

PUPIL RESPONSES

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

Both me and my mum feel I would be safer here until I am a bit older Y4

Most children need more time to get to know more stuff so that they fit in when they move schools Y4

Our friendship groups won't be split and we can spend more time with our friends in different classes Y4

I enjoy the games activities and our clubs and this will mean that we can carry on doing them Y3

I would be glad, this is a safe school. Y3

That would be cool; we can stay with our friends and our teachers Y3

This school is fun we do lots of good work Y2

I would be excited to stay here I like the challenge Y2

Yes I want to stay, I don't want to swop classes all the time Y1

It would be better; we would get to learn more Y1

STAFF RESPONSES

All staff fully support our proposal to extend our age range to 11. We have expertise and experience of teaching in primary schools and staff are looking forward to developing our curriculum to meet the needs of the older primary aged child.

Transition to middle school in Year 5 results in our children experiencing a negative impact on both their social and emotional wellbeing and their academic achievement. SENCo

The children will be in a secure, safe environment which will encourage them to attain the best results possible. TA

...I feel that age 11 is a more appropriate time for children to change schools. It better coincides with their physical, emotional and intellectual development and would give them a better chance of achieving their full potential. SEN TA

Response from NASUWT

Timothy Ramsden welcomed the chance to comment on our proposal but did not wish to comment on the matter of 'three, two or indeed one-phase education'. He does raise questions for the governors about, possible increased workload for staff, staffing levels and the possibility of job losses in the middle sector. He also believes that the school needs a 'committed, strong and experienced governing body to support all staff through the period of change'. The leadership of Thornhill was recently judged to be outstanding by Ofsted, May 2011, governors are strong and very actively involved in the school, they have the expertise to lead this school through a change of age range.

RESPONSES FROM OTHERS

A parent governor within Central Bedfordshire, while not expressing any particular opinion about our proposal, shared a couple of positive aspects of transition from lower to middle school at year 5. 'However, I wish only to provide you with the positive experiences for pupils using the three tier system and appreciate that these may not be found across all of Central

Bedfordshire.’

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. (Parent)

My experience of talking to parents of Y5 children is that they are very happy with the facilities that can be provided within a larger school. (Support staff KHMS)

I feel it would be a positive step towards improving the standards at Key Stage 2. It should be recognised that one of the strengths in Central Bedfordshire is that Lower School provision continues to be good or better. Local Councillor

*We would support this proposal and look forward to working with your school KHM S
Governors*

I am very pleased to support this school based initiative, especially as it has wide support among other schools in Houghton Regis Andrew Selous MP

*This change is needed to maximise the learning experience for children in Houghton Regis
School Governor/ Local Resident*

There is full support for the change St Christopher’s Lower School

We have been delighted with the very positive responses to our proposal. The vast majority of respondents believe that children in Years 5 and 6 will benefit if they were to remain at Thornhill Lower School for those additional two years. 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.

RESPONSE TO POINTS RAISED BY THE STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM (SLT) KINGS HOUGHTON MIDDLE SCHOOL (KHMS)

We received a response from the above who strongly disagreed with the proposal. Surprisingly this was in contrast to the response received from the school’s Governing Body who support the proposal.

They comment on the following;

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.

They 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.

Reference was made 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.

Lower schools are 'not' 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 Hawthorn 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 as usual heard nothing again until January 2012 when my deputy arranged with the Deputy Head at Kings Houghton, for us to mentor a Year 5 teacher. We have dates in our diary for maths to be observed and for us to support with planning and teaching in year 5.

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 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 Head teacher in her own 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 also commented “*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 response also 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 Head teacher 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 response 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 in Dunstable have a very strong working relationship. 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.

Outcomes of the Staff and Union Representatives Meeting: 11 January 2012

The meeting for staff and union officials was attended by all teaching staff, the majority of support staff and Sarah Anderson NUT and Norman Wright ATL. Other Union officials sent their apologies.

Norman Wright ATL.

What would happen to extra children if we reduce our intake?

A. Our current and predicted school capacity was explained to Norman and this clearly indicates that we would not reach our full capacity until 2019

Norman Wright ATL

Transfer would cause confusion for parents.

A. Current thinking is that parents should have a choice and from our feedback from parents we feel that the vast majority will choose to keep their children in a primary setting until 11 and then transfer to a secondary school. Barnfield Academy currently admits children at 11 and All Saints Academy has applied to lower its age range to 11.

Sarah Anderson NUT

Will you be looking at some kind of assessment impact on the middle schools?

A. There is great uncertainty about our feeder middle schools. We are not sure which Academy Kings Houghton will be joining, they did apply to become a secondary school. Mill Vale has now joined with Barnfield Academy and has plans to convert to a primary school themselves. These are our two main feeder schools.

Norman Wright ATL

When I was a middle school teacher children enjoyed using our science and DT labs.

A. We don't need science labs and specialist equipment to meet the standards expected at age 11. Our curriculum is exciting, it is based around children's needs and interests and all children make good progress. We will need to extend our resources in all subjects to meet the learning needs of years 5 and 6 but we don't feel they need a secondary approach of specialist labs. This is something they can look forward to in their secondary school.

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The Governing Body met on 6 February 2012 to look at the responses and to discuss this report.

The following Statement, written by the Chair and Vice Chair, was unanimously agreed.

**Statement from Thornhill Lower School Governing Body
regarding the Proposal to extend the age range of Thornhill Lower School to 3-11 years.**

The Governing Body of Thornhill Lower School consists of a mix of parent governors, community governors and local council governors.

We (the Governing Body) fully support the proposal to extend the age range at Thornhill Lower, because 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 this school.

Our recent Ofsted inspection judged the Governing Body and SLT 'Outstanding', quoting "The

head teacher and the governing body have demonstrated an unrelenting drive to provide the best for the pupils.” Unfortunately we do not believe this excellent education and pastoral care is being continued as our children move on to the next stage of their education.

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 on 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 assessments show, when children leave Thornhill Lower, the majority are achieving well and have reached or progressed above LA 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 that the majority of our children move on 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 on to a school where only 40% of children reach the national expectations for these core subjects, the lowest percentage in Central Bedfordshire. Recent data from the Department of Education shows that children who enter secondary education (Y7) at lower than expected levels, rarely ‘catch up’.

The Governing Body at Thornhill Lower has had numerous discussions with our parents and the overwhelming response is that they wholeheartedly support this proposal, the only negative comments being ‘why haven’t we done this sooner’. Also, from our consultation questionnaire, our parents were unanimous in their support of the proposal.

This proposal is not something the Governing Body has entered into lightly. 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 believe this change will go a long way towards helping the children of Houghton Regis develop into well rounded, well- educated children who are equipped, educationally and emotionally, to move on to the next stage of their educational journey.

We therefore request that this proposal be allowed to proceed to the Statutory Notice Stage.

Signed:

Mrs J Clatworthy, Chair of governor