

## **CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENT – 10 MAY 2011**

### **REVISED SCHEME FOR SCHOOLS TO LOWER THEIR AGE OF ADMISSION AND GUIDANCE FOR WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PRE-SCHOOLS AND OTHER EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE PROVIDERS**

#### **Report by Director for Children, Education & Families**

#### **Introduction**

1. This report requests approval for the process for schools wishing to lower their age of admissions to include nursery aged children or to merge with a pre-school provider on site. We have reviewed the scheme for Partnership Foundation Stage Units (originally approved by the Council in 2002 and updated in October 2007) and are recommending it is replaced with guidance on partnership working (Annex 7). The members of the Early Years Working Group have been consulted about the proposed changes.

#### **Revised process for application to develop a nursery class**

2. The scheme has been updated to take account of national changes and terminology as well as organisational changes within the Council. It now incorporates additional guidance for partnership working (Annex 7) which also sets out possible different governance models for early years and childcare provision on schools sites.

#### **Replacing the legal agreements for Partnership Foundation Stage Units**

3. On the basis of feedback received from schools and pre-schools, it is proposed to replace the legal Partnership Foundation Stage Unit agreements with less burdensome and legalistic guidance for schools and pre-schools wanting to work more closely together (Annex 7). We continue to support partnership working which can only be beneficial to both partners and ultimately the children and families they serve. Schools and pre-schools with a legal agreement in existence can continue to use it for as long as it serves the local situation.

#### **Main Changes to the Scheme**

4. Main changes to the Scheme:
  - School Organisation and Planning team is the first point of contact and will see the process through from start to finish
  - Greater coherence in ensuring impact is assessed in terms of Council's duties to ensure sufficiency of places – particularly for funded 2,3 and 4 year olds
  - Better signposting to HR, finance, property and legal advice
  - Earlier involvement and support from the schools finance team to ensure financial viability
  - Updated Quality Scheme (Annex 6) to take account of national guidance and Local Priorities
  - New Annex 7 to encourage partnership working.

## **Legal Implications**

5. The former legal agreements for Partnership Foundation Stage Units which were signed by the Council, Schools and Pre-school is being withdrawn. However, where there are existing working partnerships in place, these can be continued for as long as required.

## **Financial and Staff Implications**

6. There are no additional financial pressures arising from the revisions to the scheme. Closer involvement of finance and childcare business support officers at an early stage in the application will ensure schemes are viable.
7. Schemes need to demonstrate they can meet the highest quality standards and will only be approved if they can be shown to have a positive rather than a negative impact on sufficiency of places.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

8. **The Cabinet Member for Schools Improvement is RECOMMENDED to approve the revised scheme.**

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Background papers: Nil

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