

**CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION
22 APRIL 2013**

APPLICATION TO OPEN A NEW FOUNDATION STAGE UNIT

Report by Director for Children's Services

Introduction

1. Hill View Community Primary School has completed the first stage of the scheme for applying to open a Foundation Stage Unit (new nursery class). In order to proceed to the second stage the application requires the approval of the Cabinet Member for Education.

Background

2. The proposal is to open a Foundation Stage Unit with 40 children aged 3-4. The aim is to replace and improve upon on-site provision following the closure of Hill View Pre-school. The Head teacher aims to improve the management and organisation of the Foundation Stage and to raise the quality of teaching and learning for these youngest children. This links to a corporate objective of raising achievement.

Financial Report

3. The finance officer has assessed the financial position with the school and governors. The report shows it to be in balance for all three years. This indicates the sustainability of the proposal assuming the number of children planned for will be forthcoming.

Premises Report

4. The premises report indicates that the space is sufficient for the proposed pupil numbers under the Early Years Statutory Framework. There are at present insufficient toilets but the school plan to address this before the FSU opens. The environment is secure. It has access to an outdoor area.
5. There are current plans for building work at the school to provide for growth in numbers of statutory school age pupils. We will investigate whether these plans can be adapted to create a purpose built FSU in due course.

Quality Report

6. The FSU will be led by an existing PGCE member of staff with an early year's specialism. The planned staffing overall is suitable for the expected numbers of children. The School Head teacher has sought regular advice from the County Council early year's advisory teacher in developing the FSU plans. The teacher who will lead the unit has been observed as good and outstanding by the head teacher, the EYAT and by OFSTED. The supporting practitioners are currently performance managed as part of the school systems. The current EYFS was deemed to be 'good' in March 2011.
7. The school has developed strong links with parents of F1 children. Children and parents have a home visit before they start school. Parents contribute to their children's learning via home-school diaries, homework, reading diaries, learning journals and by attending stay and play sessions, parents' meetings and parent workshops throughout the year. The key person system will be the foundation of this partnership.
8. These practices will be extended to the parents of F2 and F3 children and the Head teacher is seeking advice on this from her early year's advisory teacher. There is a commitment to using high quality resources.
9. The Governing body and current school staff are keen for the new unit to be established as they firmly believe that an earlier connection with the school will benefit local children and the local community.
10. The County Council Early Years Advisory Teacher is fully supportive of this proposal and adds that the establishment of a good quality provision in this location is highly desirable.

Responses from Informal Consultation

11. The required consultations are currently still in progress, with a closing date of 15 April. The proposal has had to be developed rapidly as part of the Early Years Sufficiency and Access Manager's investigations on sufficiency of early year's places in this area of Banbury, since the pre-school's decision to close. There will be a shortage of places for September 2013 if this proposal does not go ahead and this is exacerbated by the fact that the extension to the entitlement for disadvantaged two year olds will also be introduced. Three year old places in the new FSU should free up some other places in the area for two year olds. However we have advised the school that the urgency of the application should not mean that the statutory consultations are foreshortened. An update on the final position regarding these consultations will be presented at the meeting.

12. RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member for Education is **RECOMMENDED** to agree to the publication of statutory notices to take this proposal forward to the next formal phase.

JIM LEIVERS

Director for Children's Services

Background papers: Proposal form from school, reports from finance and premises officers and the advisory teacher for the area. These are available from the Contact Officer – or from Janine Foulkes-Williams, Senior Officer (Early Years Organisation) 01865 815181
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