

## DELEGATED DECISIONS BY CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**MINUTES** of the meeting held on Tuesday, 17 March 2026 commencing at 3.00 pm and finishing at 3.10 pm

**Present:**

**Voting Members:** Councillor Sean Gaul– in the Chair

**Officers:** Lisa Lyons (Director of Childrens Services), Heavey, Louise (Pupil Place Planning Manager), Jaswinder Didiaily (Assistant Director SS Sufficiency), Jane Maharry (Service Manager - School Organisation), Jack Ahier (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

*The Cabinet Member considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting and agreed as set out below. Copies of the agenda and reports are attached to the signed Minutes.*

### **27 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

(Agenda No. 1)

There were none

### **28 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

(Agenda No. 2)

The Cabinet Member approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2026, as an accurate record of the proceedings

### **29 QUESTIONS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS**

(Agenda No. 3)

There were none received.

### **30 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS**

(Agenda No. 4)

There were no requests

### **31 PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ACE NURSERY**

(Agenda No. 5)

The Cabinet Member considered a report which indicated that under Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, a local authority could propose the closure

of all categories of maintained school. In this regard it was proposed to close the Ace Centre Maintained Nursery School.

The Ace Centre Nursery School was located on the Burford Road in the centre of Chipping Norton and was one of 7 maintained nursery schools across Oxfordshire. The proposal followed significant challenges faced by the nursery including a sustained and substantial reduction in pupil numbers, which had affected its financial and educational viability. There had been significant changes in leadership over the past four years with a new Headteacher and Governing body. The Headteacher also resigned during the Autumn term of 2025 and left on 31st December 2025.

The Council was also committed to ensuring that alternative early years' provision remains available locally to minimise any impact on families and the wider community.

Resolved to:

- a. Approve the proposed closure of The Ace Centre Maintained Nursery School.

## **32 DIDCOT VALLEY PARK SPECIAL SCHOOL - EDUCATION SPECIFICATION AND APPROVAL TO START LA PRESUMPTION PROCESS**

(Agenda No. 6)

The Cabinet Member considered a report which indicated Oxfordshire's Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Sufficiency Delivery Strategy identified the need for two new special schools in the south-east of Oxfordshire, one for children with Social, Emotional & Mental Health and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder (SEMH/ASD) needs, and one for children with Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) or Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), and other associated needs.

Oxfordshire County Council would not run either of the new schools. The 2011 Education Act requires that all new schools are expected to be academies/free schools. This law meant that they are not run by the county council except in exceptional circumstances. Instead, academies were run by independent academy trusts.

Didcot currently had no special schools. The nearest maintained community special schools (primarily educating children with PMLD/SLD needs) were in Abingdon and Wantage. This meant children and young people with SEND faced long journeys to access suitable education provision. The purpose of this report was to provide information on the consultation outcome and seek Cabinet Member approval to move onto the next stage of the process

Resolved to:

- a. Approve the specification for the new special school serving the Didcot area, and for a competitive process to be launched to identify an academy sponsor to run the school.

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..... in the Chair

Date of signing ..... 2026