



Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 20th January 2016

Dove First School: Outcome of Consultation on a Change from Community School to Church of England Voluntary Controlled (VC) School

Cllr Ben Adams, Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills said,

“Every child deserves a good education and we want all our schools to be rated as ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ by OFSTED. The right foundation of learning and skills is vital for our young people to access good jobs and live healthier, happier and independent lives.

“Increasingly our schools are becoming self-supporting, controlling their own destiny and forming strong partnerships and networks. Dove First School is rated by OFSTED as ‘Good’ and the governing body want to enhance further the educational experience of students by becoming a Church of England voluntary controlled (VC) school.

“I share the school’s wish to benefit from strong partnerships within the Diocese, through becoming a Church of England primary school.”

Report Summary:

1. The County Council’s overriding priority is for a prosperous economy that will provide jobs and opportunities to help make Staffordshire a safe, healthy and aspirational place to live in. The proposal in this report will help to ensure children get a good education so they are well prepared for their adult lives and will support the county council’s statutory duty to promote diversity in school provision.
2. Following an overwhelmingly positive response to the statutory consultation, Cabinet is asked to consider the responses received and to determine whether to progress the proposal to publish a formal statutory proposal to close Dove First School linked with a proposal from the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education that the school opens as a new Church of England voluntary controlled (VC) school on 1 September 2016.

Recommendation(s)

I recommend that:

- a. Cabinet approve the publication of a statutory proposal to close Dove First School on 31 August 2015, subject to a linked proposal from the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education to open the school as a Church of England voluntary controlled (VC) school on 1 September 2016.

Local Members Interest	
Philip Atkins	Uttoxeter - Rural

Cabinet – 20th January 2016

Dove First School: Outcome of Consultation on a Change from Community School to Church of England Voluntary Controlled (VC) School

Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Learning and Skills

- a. Approval for the publication of a statutory proposal to close Dove First School on 31 August 2016, subject to a linked proposal from the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education to open the school as a Church of England voluntary controlled (VC) school on 1 September 2016.

Report of Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Families and Communities

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. Our vision for a Connected Staffordshire is where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy. Every child deserves a good education and to be “ready for life”, with the drive to want to attain a good job and the skills to do so.
2. Dove First School, in Rocester, already operates with a Christian ethos, reflected in the school’s values, its strong sense of community, and helping others. The Governors believe that the educational experience of students would be further enhanced if the School became a Church of England voluntary controlled (VC) school.
3. The county council is also committed to achieving excellence in learning and skills and welcomes the increased diversity in school provision that would be provided by the school becoming a Church of England primary school in Staffordshire.
4. The recent formal consultation demonstrated overwhelming support for the proposed change and the next stage in the legal process is the publication of a statutory proposal.

Background

5. Following a delegated decision to consult the County Council, together with the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education and the Governing Body of Dove First School, has consulted formally on proposals for Dove First School to become a Church of England voluntary controlled school.
6. The proposals would provide additional support for the school to further strengthen the quality of education at Dove First and to help continually to improve the experience, progress and attainment of pupils.
7. The formal consultation document explained the rationale for change:
 - a. Dove First would become part of the Diocese of Lichfield, which operates 205 schools and academies across seven Local Authority areas in the West Midlands. This would strengthen the school's existing links with the Parish Church and other church schools, including Ryecroft CE(C) middle school This will enable much closer working together and enable a better transition for the children to the neighbouring Middle School.
 - b. It will assist when the school moves to a new school site where Dove First and Ryecroft Middle Schools will be neighbours.
 - c. The Diocese has also established a partnership with the Diocese of Birmingham and Wolverhampton University, known as The Church of England Central Education Trust (CECET). This new Trust offers a framework for school improvement and the professional development of staff.
 - d. Have a control over decision making and the school's future and assist their plans to develop and further improve educational outcomes.
 - e. Strengthen links
 - f. The formal consultation took place between 12 October and 9 November 2015.
8. Response forms were distributed to all stakeholders and 22 returns were received to the consultation. The overwhelming majority of adults who responded agreed with the proposed change, twenty (91%) supported the proposal and two responses (9%) indicated no strong view on the proposal. There were no responses received that did not support the proposal.
9. The outcome of the recent formal consultation is discussed in the Director's Commentary in Appendix A and the written responses received and notes of consultation meetings are shown in Appendix B.
10. The next steps are that if this report is approved, a statutory proposal would be published with a six week 'representation period' for comment and objection. Following this Cabinet would meet again, in April 2016, to consider any objections and comments and to determine the linked proposals.

List of Background Documents:

The public consultation document can be viewed on the school's website:

<http://www.staffordshire.gov.uk/yourcouncil/consultationandfeedback/consultationdetails.aspx?consultationid=dove-first-school-consultation&consultationdeptid=education-and-learning>

School Organisation: Guidance for Decision-makers (Department for Education)
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278418/School_Organisation_Guidance_2014.pdf

Report Commissioner: Anna Halliday

Job Title: Commissioner for Education and Wellbeing

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Summary of Community Impact Assessment (including a Health Impact Assessment if applicable) for Dove First School: outcome of consultation on a change from community school to Church of England voluntary controlled (C) school

	Impact Assessment	
SCC's Priority Outcomes & Impact Areas	Impact	Provide brief detail of impact
Prosperity, knowledge, skills, aspirations	Positive	Strengthened support, partnerships and networks will help raise standards to ensure young people are 'ready for life'
Living safely	Neutral	
Supporting vulnerable people	Neutral	
Supporting healthier living	Neutral	
Highways and transport networks	Neutral	
Learning, education and culture	Positive	Will provide additional support to the school to benefit teaching and learning
Children and young people	Positive	The educational experience of pupils would be further enhanced
Citizens and decision making, improved community involvement	Positive	If the report is approved, a statutory proposal would be published with a 6-week "representation period" for comment and objection. Cabinet would determine the proposals in April 2016.
Physical environment including climate change	Neutral	
Maximisation of use of community property portfolio	Neutral	(NB The school is due to be relocated as part of the Basic Need programme.)
Equalities Impact	Impact: (positive / neutral / negative)	Provide brief detail of impact
Age	Neutral	
Disability	Neutral	
Ethnicity	Neutral	
Gender	Neutral	
Religion / Belief	Positive	The school would continue to serve its local community. The change would add to parental choice.

Sexuality	Neutral	
	Impact / Implications	
Resource and value for money (in consultation with finance representatives)	<p>However, the school is due to benefit from a move to a new built school sharing the site with Ryecroft Middle CE (C) School.</p> <p>A legal agreement would be reached so that the successor school makes suitable provision for any revenue budget deficit, formula capital deficit loans and from the predecessor school.</p>	
Risks identified and mitigation offered (see corporate risk register categorisation)	<p>If Cabinet do not approve the recommendation, it would undermine the governing body's wish to determine the school's own status and denomination.</p>	
Legal imperative to change if applicable (in consultation with legal representative)	<p>The county council has a statutory duty to promote diversity in school provision. The county council's is the statutory proposer and decision maker for the closure of the school.</p>	