

PROPOSAL TO EXTEND THE AGE RANGE AT VICTORIA INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL, BARROW-IN-FURNESS

Section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation (prescribed alterations to maintained schools) (England) Regulations 2016.

1. Name of Proposing Body and the Affected Educational Establishment

The proposing body is Westmorland and Furness Council, School Organisation Team, Post Box 305, Kendal, LA9 9GZ.

The affected Educational Establishment is Victoria Infant and Nursery School, Oxford Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA14 5QN.

2. Description of Alteration

Westmorland and Furness Council intends to change the age range of Victoria Infant and Nursery School, Oxford Street, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, LA14 5QN from 3 to 7 years to 2 to 7 years of age on 7 January 2025. The school is planning on providing thirty, fifteen-hour places in the two-year-old room. Furthermore, it is anticipated that a further ten full-time equivalent places will be developed in the three-year-old child provision as a result.

As the school's admissions authority, the Local Authority is statutorily required to consult with all relevant stakeholders on the proposal and subject to the outcome of that consultation, take a final decision on whether to approve the proposal.

3. Evidence

The Local Authority has a duty to secure sufficient childcare and early education places in Westmorland and Furness. Existing entitlements for parents and carers include 15 hours of free early education for eligible two-year-olds and all three and four-year-olds, and 30 hours for three- and four-year-olds from working families. In March 2023, the government announced an expansion of these entitlements to include 15 hours free early education for children aged nine months upwards from September 2024; take up of the two-year old offer in Westmorland and Furness is 94% which is higher than nationally. All children aged nine months upwards from working families will be able to access 30 hours of free early education by September 2025.

It is against this context that the Governing Body of Victoria Infant and Nursery School have approached the Local Authority with a request to extend the age range of their school to enable the school to provide nursery places for two-year-olds. The school is planning on providing thirty, fifteen-hour places in the two-year-old room. This means that there will be fifteen morning

sessions and fifteen afternoon sessions created. There will also be benefits in terms of the offering for three-year-old children at the setting. Children will be able to start at the setting sooner in the academic year and the actual capacity of the three- year- old provision will be increased further with the creation of ten full time equivalent places broken down as ten 15-hour places in the morning and ten 15-hour places for the afternoon.

Both the school and Local Authority are confident that there is a pre-existing demand for two-year-old places from the parents of those children who are already attending the school. To gauge the level of potential demand and demonstrate the potential viability of any two-year provision, the school has undertaken an informal consultation exercise with its parents and received twenty- two expressions of interests from parents indicating their intention to take up the offer of two-year provision if it were available.

4. Objectives of Proposal

The Local Authority considers that this proposal would be a positive development for the school and would also be of significant benefit to the school's pupils and their families in increasing the number of funded childcare places in Barrow-in-Furness.

5. Effect on nearby Educational Institutions

None.

6. Funding for the Proposal

The expenditure for the proposal is minimal. The school has the capacity within its existing premises to accommodate more children without requiring any major building work. The school has applied for an early years' capital grant to support with the costs of refurbishing the proposed nursery space. Victoria Infant and Nursery School has confirmed that funding raised by the School's Parent Teacher Association will be utilised in the event that the grant application not being successful.

7. Implementation and Any Proposed Stages for Implementation.

The implementation date for the age range extension would be 7 January 2025.

8. Objections and Comments

Within four weeks of the publication date of this notice any person wishing to raise objections or make comments on the proposal may do so in writing to the Westmorland and Furness Council, School Organisation Team, Post Box 305, Kendal, LA9 9GZ or by emailing school.organisation.waf@cumbria.gov.uk by Sunday 20 October 2024.