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Public Consultation – 2nd September 2024  
to 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024

# Proposed Change of Age Range of St Barnabas CofE First and Middle School

## Introduction

This document helps to explain the proposals and the steps of this process, including:

- the background to proposals;
- who can propose and decide on changes;
- what is being proposed;
- why it is being proposed;
- the impact of the proposals;
- how and when the proposals if agreed would be implemented;
- who is being consulted;
- how to submit a consultation response; and
- what happens at the end of the consultation period.

If you require any additional information not included in this document to enable you to make a response, please contact [PershoreReview@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:PershoreReview@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk) or the school:

<b>Address</b>	St. Barnabas CE First and Middle School, Stonebow Road, Drakes Broughton, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 2AW
<b>Email</b>	office@st-barnabasfirstmiddle.worcs.sch.uk
<b>Phone number</b>	01905 840366

## Have your say...

It is very important that all those involved or have an interest have a say, we welcome your views.

An online survey can be accessed from the school website or [Worcestershire County Council Pershore Review webpage](#). If you are unable to access the online response form, please email the school office.

Paper responses must be submitted to the school office.

The four-week consultation period commences on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September and closes at noon on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024. It is very important that all those wishing to respond to these proposals do so within this timeframe.


We are holding a consultation event to allow our stakeholders to learn more about our proposals and give the opportunity to provide feedback. A summary of events can be found in the table below:

Date & Time	Location & address	Delivery
16 September 2024 Time 6:30pm	St. Barnabas CE First and Middle School, Stonebow Road, Drakes Broughton, Persnore, Worcestershire WR10 2AW	Face-to-face

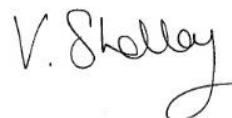
Yours sincerely,



Mrs Elizabeth Whetham  
Headteacher



Chair of Local Academy Board



Vicki Shelley  
DoWMAT CEO

**Responses required by noon on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

## **School Details**

Name and Address:	St. Barnabas CE First and Middle School, Stonebow Road, Drakes Broughton, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 2AW		
Status:	Academy		
Ofsted Rating / Date:	Good 8 November 2023		
Current age range:	2 to 12	Proposed age range:	2 to 11
Point(s) of Entry:	Reception & Year 5	Proposed point(s) of entry:	Reception
Total pupil capacity as of 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2023:	393	Proposed total pupil capacity:	315 plus Nursery
Published admission number (PAN) as of 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2023:	30 (Yrs R,1,2,3,4)  81 (Yrs 5,6,7)	Proposed PAN:	45 (Yrs R-6)
Currently pupils' transition to:	Middle School at Year 5	Proposed for pupils to transition to:	High School at Year 7

## **Background information**

The Pershore Education Planning Area is made up of 15 Schools serving the town of Pershore and surrounding rural area. From September 2019 several schools had proposals agreed to change age ranges to create an option for a two-tier (Primary and Secondary school) system of education for families. A total of 6 schools in the Pershore area currently operate as Primary and Secondary schools.

St Barnabas CE First & Middle School currently enjoys the unique status of being the only combined First & Middle School in the UK. The school provides education for children aged from four in our Reception class, to twelve-year old students in Year 7.

We value our Voluntary Controlled status and our close links with the local church as well as being part of the Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust (DOWMAT). We also work closely with the Worcestershire Diocesan Board of Education Team.

Members of the Local Academy Board, teachers, support staff, parents and friends work together to ensure that the wellbeing of the children is at the heart of all that we do. We ensure that the lively, stimulating and caring environment within the school enables the children to progress to achieve their academic potential and to develop as balanced, well-adjusted, thoughtful and polite young people.

We see education as a partnership between children and adults and look to work closely with our families to empower our pupils to develop a lifelong interest in learning.

St. Barnabas CE First and Middle School joined the Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust in March 2017 and, as a result, benefits from a dynamic collaborative network of 16 academies and the extensive school improvement support the Trust offers.

## **What is proposed**

### **First and Middle School changing age range to a Primary School**

It is proposed to alter the age range of St Barnabas CofE First and Middle School from 2-12 to 2-11. This would change the school from a first & middle school to a primary school.

Children would remain at the school for Years 5 and 6. Children in Year 6 would then transition to a Secondary School for Year 7 onwards.

Historic and Forecast number on roll at St Barnabas First and Middle School:

	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	Total
Oct 2022	16	15	20	22	23	33	26	28	183
Oct 2023	26	17	19	21	21	32	33	30	199
Oct 2024	24	26	18	20	21	28	33	30	200
Oct 2025	23	24	28	19	20	21	30	31	196
Oct 2026	24	23	25	30	19	20	21	28	190
Oct 2027	21	25	20	27	30	25	28		176

*Based on 5-year average transfer rates and anticipated stay on rates to year 5 based on similar school conversions. Includes children from expected new housing developments.*

The school is currently built to support 390 pupils, with 199 pupils currently on roll. The primary school could accommodate a total of 315 pupils.

## **Why is it being proposed?**

Changes to schools in the Pershore education planning area over several years has led to uncertainty and sustainability concerns across the education planning area. At present, one school exists outside of the Pershore tier structure in the two-tier Catholic pyramid; six schools have changed or have approved changes to two-tier; and two further schools have already consulted on change of age range proposals.

The creation of additional places in years 5, 6 and 7 because of the approved changes has resulted in an unsustainable level of surplus/excess places in these year groups. The creation of additional places in years 5, 6 and 7 because of the approved changes has resulted in a forecast level of surplus in these year groups of 40% in September 2024, which is projected to rise. This creates significant difficulty to provide key stage 3 (Year 7, ages 10 to 11) curriculum.

Over the last two years when a choice has been available, we have seen parents in the area choosing a Primary and Secondary (two-tier system) education in their school admissions applications, with an increasing percentage choosing to remain at already converted primary schools and a number choosing to transfer from first to primary schools during Key Stage 1 and 2.

This creates a risk to ensuring clear and high-quality education journeys for pupils.

St. Barnabas has seen the impact of this over recent years, especially since the conversion of one of its main feeder first schools to a primary in 2020. Previously the school catered for three classes in each of its year groups 5, 6, and 7. Moving forward the school is looking to take in one class of up to 30 pupils in Years 5 and 6, moving to a 45 intake as housing developments in the area result in more children needing a school place.

### **Who can propose and decide the changes?**

All schools in the Pershore pyramid have agreed to consult on the proposal for an area-wide transition to a two-tier system of education, however, there is no single decision-making body that can legally agree such a change for all schools. The Local Authority in their capacity as Education Authority have agreed to coordinate this consultation but are not able to solely determine these changes. For details on the types of changes and the decision-making powers for each school, please see below:

#### **For Academy Schools:**

##### ***Expansion & Change of Age Range***

Academy schools may propose to expand their physical capacity and/or change the age range of their school (including adding or removing a nursery provision or sixth form provision) by submitting a Tier 1 application to the Department for Education.

The DfE Regions Group will review the application and either approve or if risks or concerns are identified escalate to Tier 2 or Tier 3. Tier 3 applications can be determined by the Regional Director who may seek the assistance of their Advisory Board. Where the change is contentious or particularly complex, applications may be escalated to the relevant minister or Secretary of State for a decision.

##### **Changes to Admissions Policies**

No changes are planned.

### **The Impact of the Proposal**

Worcestershire County Council is committed to supporting schools, these proposals are expected to provide the following benefits to Pershore schools and local families:

- every child has a clear and transparent education journey;
- schools are supported to deliver good education outcomes in a stable and known education system; and
- schools to deliver a full curriculum and remain sustainable and financially viable.

##### **Quality of provision and breadth of curriculum**

All teachers at St. Barnabas CE Middle School are qualified to teach across the whole primary age range and have previous experience of working in schools offering full primary provision.

The staff have a range of expertise which covers the full primary curriculum. In addition, the school will work closely within the DoWMAT to share best practice and ensure teaching provision and the quality of education is up to date and of high quality.

The proposed changes will have no detrimental impact on the quality of education for any of its pupils.

In addition, despite the changes, the new St. Barnabas CE Primary School will benefit from all the specialist facilities currently on offer to Year 7 pupils, especially regarding PE, Science, and IT.

### **Accommodation Required**

No additional accommodation is required to support this change.

Over the past four years, St. Barnabas has benefitted from over £500,000 from the Condition Improvement Fund (CIF), designed to support improvements to academy buildings, plus Section 106 funding. This has enabled the Trust to make substantial renovations to the building and to provide a new modern classroom base to replace old mobiles. The buildings are bright and spacious and there is ample capacity to support the school's intention to become a one and a half intake primary school, with a PAN of 45.

### **School Transport**

Changes to schools can have an impact on transport for individual pupils. However, the current Transport policy is designed to support schools and pupils in a settled education planning area, therefore, the policy is currently out of line for all options during transition phase but would be suitable once a single pathway is in place.

To manage this, for those pupils already attending a school at the time of the change, ordinarily eligible for transport support, existing transport arrangements will continue during the transition phase. Once the changes have been implemented any new pupils joining the school will be subject to the normal application of the transport policy.

## **School staff**

Implications for school staff would include reductions in some schools and the need for more staff in other schools. For the two academy Middle schools, this has already resulted in a few redundancies for existing staff and the costs associated with this. A limited number of further redundancies may occur as part of the re-organisation. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) have been notified of this concern and are working with the Multi Academy Trust. Individual schools and Trusts will work as far as possible to support staff as part of the proposed changes.

## **Vulnerable pupils**

It is envisaged that the change to a single tier system will make education transitions clearer and more straightforward and support, in particular, pupils from vulnerable backgrounds.

There is a strong Gypsy, Roma, Traveller community within the wider Pershore area and a specific assessment will be undertaken to ensure pupils from this community are supported during this change.

## **Financial – Capital**

These proposals will have capital and revenue implications for several different education providers in this area. Detailed feasibilities have begun at required schools to understand full capital and revenue costs and accommodation implications.

The expectation will be that the DfE will support funding for Academy Trusts in either revenue or capital funding requirements.

## **Financial – Revenue**

Revenue implications for schools are yet to be fully determined – whilst middle schools may be at increased risk from financial deficits during the change period as pupil numbers decrease, Primary and Secondary schools will have an increase in numbers and pupil-led funding, however it is likely to take time before revenue costs for primary schools are directly aligned with pupils in the classroom. The revenue implications will need to be reviewed and carefully managed on a school-by-school basis. As an academy, we will be working with our funding agency ESFA (Education, Skills, Funding, Agency).

## **Funding considerations for decision makers**

When determining these proposals, the decision-maker in each case should be satisfied that any necessary funding required to implement the proposal will be available and that all relevant local parties (e.g., trustees of the school, diocese or relevant diocesan board) have given their agreement. A proposal cannot be approved conditionally upon funding being made available.

## **Other education areas**

Some schools in Pershore education planning area attract pupils from outside of the Pershore area, for example from Evesham, Droitwich and Worcester. These proposals could impact the number of pupils able to transition into the Pershore schools because of the proposed feeder school changes and the proposed changes of age range will alter the intake points.

Evesham operates mostly a three-tier education system (First, Middle and High schools) with intake points that differ to those of Pershore and are at Year 6 (Middle) and Year 9 (High). There are three Primary schools in the Evesham area. The 5-year average shows 4

to 5 pupils moving from the Evesham Education Planning Area to Pershore Education Planning Area for Year 8 intake at Pershore High. 2021 is the only year with data for Year 7, which showed 2 children moving from Evesham to Pershore. Pupils, residents of Birlingham, Eckington can currently transfer to a Middle School in Pershore or stay in Evesham schools. If Middle Schools in Pershore close, there would no longer be a normal phase transfer point for Eckington pupils. Families could apply for places into an existing year group.

Droitwich operates mostly a three-tier education system which is in line with the Pershore transition points (First, Middle and High schools) with intake points at Year 5 (Middle) and Year 8 (High). There are four Primary schools in the Droitwich area. For Year 5, the 5-year average shows 10 pupils moving from Droitwich to Pershore. At high school level, the five year average shows an average of 11 Year 8 pupils from Droitwich choosing schools in the Pershore Education Planning Area each year. The proposed change of age ranges in Pershore would remove the same year group transition / intake points as Droitwich. Therefore, families in Droitwich wanting to move to Pershore High for Secondary school provision would need to apply at Year 7 or request to transfer for year 8 if places are available.

Worcester operates a two-tier education system (Primary and Secondary schools) with intake points in Year 7 (Secondary). This would align with the proposed changes in the Pershore area.

### **How and when if approved would the proposals be implemented?**

As part of this consultation stakeholders are being asked to consider, if approved, when they would like the changes to take effect from. We have created a [Pershore Education Journey Tracker](#) for pupils, parents and professionals to see in detail how the proposals would change the journey for pupils in the Pershore education planning area should the proposals be approved, and the year groups available at each school.

### **School changes**

- Change of age range at first schools from September 2025 when these schools officially convert to primary schools. These schools will retain Year 5 pupils in 2025/26 and Year 6 pupils in 2026/27
- First and middle schools will officially convert to primary schools from September 2025 but will retain their Year 7 pupils during 2025/26 and 2026/27
- Removal of Year 5 intake at middle schools from September 2025
- Increase of PAN and change of feeder links at Pershore High, to admit all pupils in Year 7 in pyramid from September 2027

### **Impact**

- Final Year 5 intake into Middle Schools (Abbey Park, Pinvin and St. Barnabas) will be in September 2024 and Abbey Park Middle School will close on 31st August 2025 (it then amalgamates with the first school to become a primary from 1st September 2025)



## **Who is being consulted?**

The consultation will be made available to:

- Parents and carers of pupils attending / known to the school
- Staff, Governors, Board Members of school and other local schools
- Multi-Academy Trust
- Local Parish, District and County Councillors
- Immediate neighbours of individual schools
- Local Member of Parliament
- Cabinet Member Responsible for Children and Families
- Cabinet Member Responsible for Education
- Unions
- Any other local stakeholder

## **How to respond to the consultation**

### **Consultation Phase – Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> September to Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024**

During the consultation phase anyone with an interest can express their views on the options expressed in this document and the individual school consultations.

It is very important that all those involved or have an interest have a say, we welcome your views.

All of the information available is accessible from the [Worcestershire County Council Pershore Review webpage](#) or the school website.

The four-week consultation period commences on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September and closes at noon on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024. It is very important that all those wishing to respond to these proposals do so within this timeframe.

We are holding consultation event(s) to allow our stakeholders to learn more about our proposals and give the opportunity to provide feedback. A summary of events can be found in on page 2 of this document.

## **What happens next?**

### **How the decision will be made**

At the end of the consultation period the Academy Trust will consider any issues that have been raised before deciding whether to publish or submit statutory proposals to make changes.

The Academy Trust will consider evidence from various sources to reach a considered view on the merits of the proposal. The following factors:

- Response to the public consultation;
- Quality of education provision at the schools;
- Ability of the school to manage the proposed change to support the continued improvements at the school;
- Demand for places at the school and in the local area; and

- Funding to cover the capital costs of the proposed change has been secured, and that there are no issues with the school's current budget and/or finances. In the case of expansions, academies must show they have sufficient funding for additional pupils, until lagged funding is received.

### **Submission of formal proposals**

The proposers will take note of issues raised during the consultation. At the conclusion of the consultation period a decision will be made whether to submit a formal proposal to the decision makers, requesting their support.

### **Regional Schools Commissioner Decisions**

For Academy schools, the Academy Trust Board will then submit a Tier 1 application to the DfE Regions Group alongside any requests to vary school admission arrangements.

The DfE will consider a range of factors and make a balanced judgement when deciding whether to approve or reject a proposal. The DfE may also defer the approval pending further evidence. Where proposed changes are particularly controversial and could attract adverse public or press attention; the DfE may choose to escalate such proposed changes to the Secretary of State for a decision.

### **Related proposals**

Where proposals are related to other proposals, the decision-makers must consider the related proposals together. A proposal should be regarded as related if its implementation (or non-implementation) would prevent or undermine the effective implementation of another proposal.

The Local Authority will, as far as possible, seek to coordinate all proposals.

**It is especially important that all those involved have a say. Please submit your comments by noon on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024 by completing the online response form available on the school website and [WCC website](#). If you are unable to access the online response form you can obtain a paper copy from the school office.**

### **Relevant documents:**

Head Teacher Board record of decision Avonreach Multi-Academy Trust Change of Age ranges for The Orchard, Inkberrow, Norton-Juxta-Kempsey and Pershore High Dec 2018 [\[ARCHIVED CONTENT\] \(nationalarchives.gov.uk\)](#)

Cabinet Report: Responding to Change of Age Range requests from Maintained Community Schools or Change of Age Range Consultations form other types of Schools Jan 2020: [Cabinet Report: Responding to Change of Age Range requests](#)

School Sufficiency and Organisation for the Pershore Area September 2021: [School Sufficiency and Organisation for the Pershore Area](#)

Pershore Area Review Consultation Findings and Recommendations [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 21st April, 2022, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Pershore Education Planning Area Review Consultation Responses [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 27th October, 2022, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)

Pershore Area Review Consultation update [Agenda for Cabinet on Thursday, 27th June, 2024, 10.00 am - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)