

Ulverston CE Infants' School
Consultation to change age-range to an all-through Primary School
Frequently Asked Questions

Timescale

- When will the consultation start?

Following an informal period when we had discussions with staff, Governors and Parents the formal consultation will begin on Monday 22nd October 2012 and last until Friday November 30th.

- When will a decision be made?

If following the consultation the Governing Body decide to move forward and Publish a Notice to change the age-range there will be a further period of Representation when views can be submitted to the Local Authority, they will then make the decision in April 2013.

- When will the school change age-range?

If the decision made is to change the age-range this will happen from September 2013, but it will happen gradually. This means that we will grow by one year group each year. So for the school year 2013/14 there will be Reception, year 1, 2 and 3 children in school. As the year 3 children become year 4 children the following September 2014 there will then be 5 year groups in school, organised according to numbers, and so on.

Building

- Will there be any extra buildings?

No, there are no plans to build on the site or on the field. We currently have five rooms that are being used by three classes. We will focus on using the space we have, but in a different more effective way.

- Will the playground be extended? Will you build another one on the field?

No, again the numbers will not be many more than our present maximum. If break times don't work in terms of different ages of children sharing a playground then we will make an organisational change and have breaks at different times.

- Will you need to buy new furniture?

Yes, we have considered this. As we will be growing by one year group at a time we can do this gradually over a period of time. Year 3 children are not much bigger than year 2 children. A planned and staged approach is best.

- Will you need to build new toilets?

We believe we can adapt the ones we have, changing some of the toilets and sinks for adult sized ones and changing the cubicles to provide better privacy for older children.

- What will you do about outdoor sports provision?

The main difference between Key Stage 1 and 2 P.E. is the need for team sports. We currently use our indoor space effectively for dance, gym and games. Some adjustment to the equipment may be necessary over time. Our playground is currently used for outdoor P.E. and this would require some adaptation to include for example a netball court. We use our

field for football, cricket and rounders currently and would take advice about developing the area to include facilities for older children. We have coaches from the Leisure Centre and other organisations come into school now, e.g. tennis training in the summer, and this will continue and be extended for the older children.

- Will the traffic increase?

This shouldn't happen. Our overall maximum number will not be many more than it currently is, and many junior aged children will walk to school unaccompanied.

Staffing

- Will you have male teachers? It is important for the children to have male role models. We agree. If and when we increase the staffing then this will be taken into consideration; however the quality of teaching remains the most important criteria when employing a new member of staff. We do however already have male role models in school, including football coaches, male governors, volunteers who hear readers, the PCSO who visits and our vicar and curate. We are always looking for positive role models for the children.

- Do the staff have the necessary skills to teach Key Stage 2 children?

The staff are very skilled at understanding *how* children learn, a really important requirement for teaching younger children. Teaching Key Stage 2 children still requires these skills together with knowledge and experience of teaching the Key Stage 2 curriculum. Some staff already have experience of teaching older children, and we will prepare for the changes by observing and learning from best practice in other schools. Many schools in our area and throughout the whole of Cumbria teach children in mixed age classes.

Admissions

- How many children would be in the school overall?

This will change over time, and will depend initially on how many remain after year 2 next September. Our current maximum is 90. If we reduce our intake to 15-18 then the ultimate number will be around the 105 mark.

- If we are reducing the intake where would the other children go?

Based on our current numbers only 2-5 of our current Reception would not have gained a place. There are other Reception places available in Ulverston, and some of them are at another Infant School, therefore parents would still have this option.

- Would we have to apply for places in Key Stage 2?

No, if your children are already on roll at school, then when the age-range changes they would stay.

- How would places be prioritised if you do go ahead?

There would be no need to prioritise; numbers would only be limited on entry to Reception from next year. We would not expect all children to stay on into year 3 next year as many of them have siblings elsewhere. There would be two classes, current Reception and Year 1 that may go through as larger year groups (20-25) but this would be organised depending on the numbers overall in school.

- Would we have to apply year-on-year for a place?

No, once children are on role there is no need to re-apply.

- When would we know about September 2013 intake?

Parents are informed at the end of April. This would happen just after a decision about changing the age-range. If this was positive the new admissions number would apply.

Numbers of children and class organisation

- What would be the average class size if there were mixed age classes?

Probably no more than 30. We would aim to have teaching assistant support as much as possible.

- Would the small Reception room be big enough for 30 children?

No we would keep the Reception children separate if at all possible and there would be no more than 15-18 in there. They also spend a large portion of each day learning outside. This classroom would give them access to the well-developed outdoor area. This is a statutory requirement for Foundation Stage children.

- How large will the mixed-age classes be?

We wouldn't plan on having them any larger than 30. There is a limit of 30 on Infant Class sizes and a number around this size can still be manageable in Key Stage 2.

- Would the children stay in the same class for their time in school?

This depends on the numbers in total. A disadvantage of this organisation would be that we would have to re-organise the classes each year to ensure the best grouping for the number of children within school. But within the school year they would stay with the same class.

Mixed-age classes

- Would the children in mixed age classes be learning different things in different year groups?

We would plan the curriculum carefully so that within each class the different groups could follow similar themes, however they would be learning at the level that is appropriate for them. Each child will be challenged to achieve the most they can and be grouped according to their ability within the class, not their age.

- How would mixed age classes be managed in school?

They would be managed to provide the best learning possible for each child.

- How would you protect the less able in each year group?

In the same way we do now. Personalised learning means that each child has their own learning targets. Children's confidence is developed in their own abilities. Some teaching is already undertaken across classes. This is to ensure that children have access to the teaching they need at a highly differentiated level. But their successes are celebrated and their needs are met. We would continue to devolve teaching assistant support within the classes to support individual learning and to work in differentiated groups where possible, especially in English and Maths.

- Will there be mixed age teaching at the top junior classes and will the children be at the right level to go onto UVHS?

Depending on the numbers, there will be mixed age teaching in most classes eventually (when there are 7 year groups) this applies to upper Key Stage 2 also. Again, children will be learning at their own challenging levels which would mean that they reach at least National Expectations at the end of Key Stage 2.

Resources

- Will there be libraries, P.E. facilities and computers?

Our facilities already compare well to other primaries. Developing our library is on our school development plan this year, whether we become a primary or not. Infant children need the best facilities possible in the same way that older children do and we use funding whenever possible to develop our facilities. Our classes are very well resourced in terms of ICT and we would plan to increase interactive whiteboards/plasma screens if our class numbers increased.

Church School Provision

Parents from Church have expressed the view that the Christian values and ethos of the school were important factors in their choice of a school.

- How is Church Walk distinctive as a Church School?

There are close links with the Parish Church, and having a Christian ethos is important to every member of staff. There are many elements of school which contribute to us being judged by SIAS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican Schools) as a 'Good' Church school, in terms of Christian ethos, Collective Worship, R.E. and Leadership and Management.

Links with UVHS and transition

- The fact that children do not change to another school before UVHS could be a real shock for them, how would this be managed?

Transitions, both into and out of school, are something we consider to be very important. We spend time and energy ensuring the arrangements are as effective as possible and the success of these transitions shows that arrangements work well. For some children transitions are very difficult and our change in status would reduce the need for this transition at KS1/2.

As an Infant School we do not yet have strong links with UVHS because our children do not go there directly, however a change to Primary status would give us the opportunity to strengthen these links and ensure children make the Key Stage 2/3 transition well. Many children transfer from small primaries to UVHS successfully and we will work with these schools also to look at best practice in terms of transition. Being part of a large primary does not necessarily prepare children any better for the move to Secondary education than from a small primary, it is the quality of their experiences, their confidence, resilience and relationship skills that supports these changes.

Curriculum

Many curriculum issues that parents are concerned about would happen automatically in the change to a primary. At the moment our curriculum is very effective for younger children because that is who we are focused upon. A change to primary status means we would still provide that great Key Stage 1 curriculum but it would also give us all the opportunity to do those things which are just not appropriate with younger children, such as....

- Will there be residential trips for Key Stage 2 children?

Of course, this is something that we are excited about. Older children are able to extend their learning in many different contexts. Residential and more challenging outdoor education would be implicit in an effective and engaging Key Stage 2 curriculum. However we would still be aware of the issues in terms of supporting funding for these opportunities.

- Will you provide Cycle proficiency training?

Until very recently we did this with our Infants, while they didn't gain a cycling proficiency certificate they did do cycle and scooter safety training. We will work in partnership to do this for Juniors so that they can get their cycling proficiency award

- Will trips out of school cost more for smaller groups?

The groups going out of school on trips shouldn't be any smaller. Classes will still use the local area to extend their learning and the whole class will do this. As now, we make certain that any trips are not too expensive for families; we gain local funding to provide free travel for one trip a year and this will continue. There is a Family Support Fund for use by families on these occasions and this will continue also. The main difference will be that trips can be further afield and more challenging for older children and this is an exciting opportunity.

- Will R.E. include other world views? This is important.

We agree. The R.E. syllabus for Key Stage 1 currently includes studying Christianity, Judaism and other world religions. At Key Stage 2 this would also include another religion too.

- Will children be able to go swimming?

Yes, once children are in Key Stage 2 swimming is part of the National Curriculum. We are considering how to arrange this for our current year 2 children and would certainly do this for Key Stage 2.

Clubs

- Which after-school clubs will be available? Would they be fee paying?

There would be after-school clubs, as there is now. Throughout the year, we have a variety of clubs; dance, football, recorders, knitting, French, rounders, cricket, Cook and Eat, Young Explorer and Family Learning (Art, maths and Book bag making). We provide a mixture of fee paying and none fee paying clubs. Where volunteers are not able to provide clubs then expert providers are arranged, this will have a cost implication, however the Family Support Fund can pay these fees for families in receipt of benefits. The type of club available will be different for older children.

School dinners

- Will there be hot school dinners available?

This is something we have already looked at in detail. As you know the school does not have a kitchen and there is no available space to build one. Hot dinners therefore would need to be brought in daily. If there is enough demand for this then we will trial hot lunches, if this is successful then we could certainly do this. Consultations have not yet shown a demand for this.

Independence of children

- How will the junior children extend their independence?

Developing children's independence is an important part of our school ethos. Independence supports self-organisation which is vitally important in terms of children's learning skills. Their independent abilities will be challenged whichever year group they are in. Being a primary school will give us more opportunity to develop children's responsibility, for example, the School Council will be able to take on projects and complete them independently, including financial decisions, whereas currently the school council has to be very much supported by adults.

Change in culture

- Will there be a shift in culture from Infants to Junior?

Our school culture is one of **learning**, and of providing the best possible learning for each child, whatever their needs. We provide a very good quality of Infant Education because that is our focus, we would continue to provide this within a Primary context, but also be determined to develop and extend that quality for older children.

The visible evidence of the culture, i.e. the environment would need to develop to reflect the learning of older children, but this is easily achievable. This shouldn't be a case of either...or, as a community we would do whatever is necessary to provide quality learning experiences for all children in our care.

If change doesn't take place how will this impact on Church Walk school?

- Why are numbers dropping? Is there a lower birth rate at the moment?

For a variety of reasons. The number of children we expect to start each year (according to data which indicates numbers of children in the catchment area) is stable for the next few years, but according to this data we would expect to have around 27 children both in our current Reception year, while we have 20, and for September 2013, but the indicated number of children we have for that year is currently much lower.

When parents come to look around school when choosing where their children will start, they are discouraged by the fact that we can't provide Key Stage 2 classes.

We also have families from Church that either choose other Church School provision, outside of the town, or do one or two years with us and then move their children before Year 2 to secure Key Stage 2 places early.

Not all Reception classes in town are full, but our trend is definitely downwards.

- Are some parents worried about having children at both sites?

Some parents manage this very well, but there are others who can't for a variety of reasons and these parents either don't start their children at Church Walk, i.e. choose another school, or take their elder child there as soon as their younger child starts at a Primary.

Consultation

- How can parents give their views?

We will write to parents and ask them to submit their opinion and any comments. We are also consulting with our neighbouring schools, the Local Authority, the Diocese, our neighbours, the Church and the public.

- Are the Nursery committee and staff being consulted?

Yes we are hoping to arrange a meeting with them at the start of the formal consultation period.

- Will the children at Church Walk be consulted?

Yes, this has already started.

Thank you. Please direct any further questions to me, Bernadette Calvey at school.

head@churchwalk.cumbria.sch.uk I will be very pleased to include further questions into this document.