



Abbey Park  
Schools Federation

Public Consultation – 11<sup>th</sup> October to 26<sup>th</sup>  
November 2021

# Proposed Change of Age Range and Amalgamation of Abbey Park First & Nursery School and Abbey Park Middle School

## Introduction

This document helps to explain the background to 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>	Abbey Park First and Nursery School, Abbey Road, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 1DF	Abbey Park Middle School Abbey Road Pershore Worcestershire WR10 1DF
<b>Emails</b>	office@abbeyparkfirst.worcs.sch.uk	office@abbeyparkmiddle.worcs.sch.uk
<b>Phone number</b>	01386 552722	01386 552667

## 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 seven-week consultation period commences on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October and closes at noon on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021. 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:

<b>Date &amp; Time</b>	<b>Location &amp; address</b>	<b>Delivery</b>
19 <sup>th</sup> October 9AM	Abbey Park Middle School hall	Face-to-face
19 <sup>th</sup> October 6PM	Abbey Park Middle School hall	Face-to-face

Yours sincerely,

Rebecca Scully & Rachel Clements

Headteacher / Chair of Governors



**Responses required by noon on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

## **School Details**

Name and Address:	Abbey Park First School, Abbey Road, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 1DF		
Status:	Community		
Ofsted Rating / Date:	Good 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2017		
Current age range:	3 to 9	Proposed age range:	2 to 11
Total pupil capacity as of 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2021:	150 plus 26 Nursery	Proposed total pupil capacity:	210 plus 30 Nursery 30 Pre-School
Published admission number (PAN) as of 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2021:	30	Proposed PAN:	30
Currently pupils transition to:	Middle School at Year 5	Proposed for pupils to transition to:	High School at Year 7

Name and Address:	Abbey Park Middle School, Abbey Road, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 1DF		
Status:	Community		
Ofsted Rating / Date:	Requires Improvement, 23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2018		
Current age range:	9 to 12 (Years 5-7)		
Total pupil capacity as of 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2021:	252		
Published admission number (PAN) as at 1 <sup>st</sup> September 2021:	84		
Proposal:	The Middle School is proposed to close, amalgamating Years 5 & 6 into Abbey Park Primary School.		

## **Background information**

The Pershore Education Planning Area is made up of 16 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.

At no point did our Federation of schools request or want a change of age. In all previous consultations our community and stake holders did not support change of age. However, running two systems alongside each other is not viable.

## **What is proposed**

### ***Federation of schools to become one Primary***

It is proposed to alter the age range of Abbey Park Schools Federation from 3-9 (First) and 9 - 12 (Middle) to become one primary school from ages 3 -11.

Children in year 4 at the school 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 Abbey Park First / Primary School:

	<b>Pre-School</b>	<b>Nursery</b>	<b>Reception</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>	<b>Year 5</b>	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Year 7</b>	<b>Total</b>
Oct 2020	20	26	27	39	28	30	28	38	51	74	361
Oct 2021	13	25	31	28	38	29	30	36	34	47	311
Oct 2022	26	26	30	30	30	38	35	36#	42	34	327
Oct 2023	30	30	30	30	30	30	38	38	39*		295
Oct 2024	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	38	40		288

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 and half from the catchment of Orchard Primary over the school's PAN of 30. \*In option 1 this class is in Abbey Park Middle but in options 2 & 3 it is in Abbey Park Primary. #In option 3 this class is in Abbey Park Primary but in options 2 & 3 it is in Abbey Park Middle School.

The first school is currently built to support 150 school aged pupils and 26 nursery pupils, with 154 school aged pupils currently on roll in reception to Year 4. This is the result of having a 'bulge' birth year which resulted in us increasing the PAN for one year group only. This is a temporary increase and from Sep 2024, numbers will reduce again.

The Pupil Admission Number (PAN) will remain at 30. This PAN restricts intakes to 30 and the current year 2 bulge year to 38.

The middle school is currently built to support 252 pupils, with 117 pupils currently on roll. Year 7 numbers are currently 47 but this will reduce to 34 next year.

### ***Incorporate 2 year old Pre-School children***

It is proposed to lower the age range of Abbey Park Schools Federation from 3 years to 2 years to incorporate provision for two-year-olds into the maintained offer of the school alongside provision for three and four-year olds. In order to do so the age range of the school must be lowered.

Changing the age range of the school and operating two-year-old provision as part of the maintained school will have a number of benefits:

Children attending the two-year old provision can be integrated fully into the school community. Parents and carers will benefit from the opportunity to pay for services using online methods. Registration of all children will be consistent, as will tracking of attendance and attainment.

The school offer a fully inclusive environment, linking with Health and Social care professionals, which allows the school to identify early concerns and address barriers which are preventing swift progress whilst developing excellent relationships with families. The introduction of children into this journey from two will further this programme and support the school to continue to improve outcomes for children and support vulnerable families.

In addition, being able to ensuring the staff: pupil ratios reflect children's needs rather than the provision's legal requirements will enable all children to transfer to their Reception Class with a greater understanding of needs, interest, strengths and difficulties which will allow them to flourish.

### **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 as a result of the approved changes has resulted in an unsustainable level of surplus/excess places in these year groups. By 2023 we anticipate that two of the middle schools in the area will be operating at around 50% capacity, which creates significant difficulty to provide key stage 3 (Year 7, ages 10 to 11) curriculum in particular.

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.

We have seen a sharp decrease in numbers at middle school.

Abbey Park Pre-School & Nursery has growing numbers of children over the last several years. The following table details the number of pre-school children over the last 4 years:

Academic Year	Funded 2 year olds on role	Funded 3 & 4 year olds on roll
2019/20	27	30
2020/21	19 will increase each term expected to be 28 by Summer Term	29

Parents and staff would support two-year-old children to be included on the school roll as with three- and four-year olds and have acknowledged that this would make processes easier including the ability to pay for services using an online cashless alternative.

Parents and Carers also appreciated the approach to create developmentally appropriate provision which reflects the strengths and needs of all children in the nursery school without division according to age.

Some parents have requested extending the provision to provide full day sessions for two-year olds. The school responded to this and are now offering full day provision including lunch for children. The school also offer lunch sessions to 2-year-old children eligible for funding and / or Early Years Pupil Premium funding. Developmental needs are always considered when extending session outside the normal 3 hours for such young children. Their needs remain the priority focus throughout.

### **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 Local Authority Maintained (Community, Voluntary, Foundation) schools:**

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

Worcestershire County Council is the sole proposer and decision maker for prescribed alterations for community, voluntary or foundation schools to permanently enlarge premises and increase the capacity of a school (if the capacity of the school will increase by more than 30 pupils **and** 25%). Worcestershire County Council can propose and decide for prescribed alterations relating to change of age range of a community, voluntary or foundation school. For changes that are expected to be in place for more than 2 years, Local Authorities can propose a change of age range by following the statutory process, which requires the publication of Public Notices and an adequate representation period.

##### ***Amalgamations***

The Local Authority and/or Governing Body (depending on school category) can publish a proposal to amalgamate two or more schools following the statutory process. This may include the closure one school (or more) and enlargement/change the age range/transfer of site of an existing school, to accommodate the displaced pupils. Alternatively, LAs may propose to amalgamate schools by closure of all schools involved and replace them with a new school.

When proposing changes, LA's and GBs should act reasonably, and in line with the principles of public law, to ensure that the changes do not have a negative impact on the education of pupils in the area.

### **Changes to Admissions Policies**

***Published Admissions Number (PAN) where an enlargement of premises has not taken place.***

Changes to admissions policies include alterations to the Published Admissions Number (PAN) of schools, as well as changes to feeder school links and other changes affected

admission to a school. Admission authorities must set a PAN for each 'relevant age group' when determining their admission arrangements. If an admission authority of a mainstream school wishes to increase or decrease PAN, without increasing the overall capacity of the buildings, this would be classed as an admissions change, not a prescribed alteration. The statutory process described in this guidance would not need to be followed (please see the [School Admissions Code](#) for further details of the processes admission authorities must follow).

### ***Admission Arrangements***

An age range change may, in certain circumstances require changes to admission arrangements in order to implement the change. In such cases, schools must follow the admissions variation process.

An amalgamation is also likely to require an in-year variation of the school's admission arrangements. A request for an alteration to admission arrangements, in line with process, can be made at the same time as the school makes an application for a significant change.

### **Consultation on school admission arrangements**

### **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 are able to deliver a full curriculum and remain sustainable and financially viable.

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

We have experienced, highly skilled teachers and staff to support all children in EYs, KS1 and KS2.

### **Accommodation Required**

The proposal is to refurbish where possible and remodel where necessary the current accommodation to provide the facilities required to create a 1 Form Entry Primary school in line with current DfE school building guidance, Building Bulletin 103. No additional new school buildings are required as part of this proposal as there is ample capacity across the existing two schools.

These proposals retain the Blossom Vale Children's Centre by the school, as well as looking to incorporate the Pre-School (currently based in temporary mobile accommodation) within the main school buildings. The Feasibility Study completed suggests the mobile building will become surplus to requirements.

### **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 attending a school at the time of the change ordinarily eligible for transport support, special transport arrangements may be put in place to assist 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 Abbey Park Schools Federation, this could result in a small number of potential redundancies for existing staff and the costs associated with this. The Local Authority have been notified of this concern and every effort will be made to minimise the impact on staff and avoid redundancies.

### **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.

Abbey Park Middle School and Pershore High School have Mainstream Autism Resources Base provision on site for children and young people with an identified Autism diagnosis and an EHCP naming resourced provision. There is no indication that this provision would need to alter significantly apart from the age range for both bases in line with the school age ranges.

### **Financial – Capital**

These proposals will have capital and revenue implications for a number of different education providers in this area. Detailed feasibilities have been commissioned at required schools to understand full capital and revenue costs and accommodation implications.

To reconfiguration Abbey Park First and Middle schools into a Primary School will require capital funding.

### **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.

### **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. 2021 is the only year with data for Year 7 which showed 2 children moving from Evesham to Pershore. Pupils' resident 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. In September 2021 no children leaving Year 5 in Eckington transferred to a Pershore Middle school.

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. In September 2021 there were no Year 7 pupils moving from Droitwich to Pershore. 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 an [Education Journey Tracker](#) for pupils, parents and professionals to see in detail how the three options below 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.

There are three options to manage the proposed changes:

### **Option 1: Transition in line with natural progression, coordinated age range changes and coordinated accommodation changes. All changes made by September 2024.**

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Year 5	Year 5	Year 5	Year 5	Year 5
Year 6	Year 6	Year 6	Year 6	Year 6
Year 7	Year 7	Year 7	Year 7	Year 7
Primary	Middle	High		

#### **School changes**

- Change of age range at First schools in 2022 and 2023. All First schools to convert to Primary by September 2023
- Removal of Year 5 intake and change of age to remove year 7 for Middle schools from September 2023
- Increase of PAN and change of feeder links at Pershore High for 2023 to admit all pupils in year 7 in pyramid.

#### **Impact**

- Final year 5 intake in September 2022 at Abbey Park Middle and St Nicholas Middle to be the only year group on roll in Middle schools in 2023/2024 (year 6).
- Students applying for Middle school places (1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 to 15<sup>th</sup> January 2022) for September 2022 will not know at point of application that Middle schools will not be delivering year 7 places.

### **Option 2: Year groups 5 & 6 closed in Middle schools early, impacting pupils' journeys and greater impact for families. Children would need to change school after year 5 for one year. All changes made by September 2023.**

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Year 5	Year 5	Year 5	Year 5	Year 5
Year 6	Year 6	Year 6	Year 6	Year 6
Year 7	Year 7	Year 7	Year 7	Year 7
Primary	Middle	High		

### School changes

- Most First schools to convert in '22. All schools to convert to Primary by September 2023
- Closure of Abbey Middle School and St Nicholas CE Middle from September 2023 and applications made by pupils in year 5 to transfer back to a Primary for Year 6. Change of age range of St Barnabas CE First and Middle for September 2023
- Increase of PAN and change of feeder links at Pershore High for 2023 to admit all pupils in year 7 in pyramid.

### Impact

- Middle school September 2022 year 5 intake would be required to make three school applications in three years (and three transport applications where applicable)
- Rapid change for Abbey Park First and Pinvin C.E. First which will jump from R-Y4 to R-Y6 on roll in single year.

**Option 3: Emergency variation to admissions changes resulting in limited time for consultation with stakeholders before the change is implemented. No intake into Middle schools in 2022. All changes and accommodation would need to be made by 2022. All changes made by September 2023.**

2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Year 5	Year 5	Year 5	Year 5	Year 5
Year 6	Year 6	Year 6	Year 6	Year 6
Year 7	Year 7	Year 7	Year 7	Year 7
Primary	Middle	High		

### School changes

- All First schools to convert for September 2022
- Emergency variation in admission arrangements for Abbey Park Middle and St Nicholas Middle School so that there is no intake in September 2022. School closure of Abbey Park Middle and St Nicholas Middle from September 2023.
- Change of age range and removal of year 5 intake for St Barnabas for September 2023.
- Increase of PAN and change of feeder links at Pershore High for 2023 to admit all pupils in year 7 in pyramid.

### Impact

- This will require emergency variation to admissions changes but will mean clearer pathway for pupils in year 5 in 2022.
- Rapid change for First schools – several require accommodation changes so it may be difficult to manage.
- This gives families the least amount of time before changes are made.

## **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
- 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 11<sup>th</sup> October to Friday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021**

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 seven-week consultation period commences on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October and closes at noon on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021. 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 conclusion of this consultation period the Governing Body and Local Authority will consider any issues that have been raised before deciding whether to publish or submit statutory proposals to make changes.

The Governing Body and Local Authority will consider evidence from various sources in order to reach a considered view on the merits of the proposal. In particular the following factors:

- the response to the public consultation;
- the quality of education provision at the schools;
- the ability of the school to manage the proposed change
- 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.

### **Cabinet Decisions**

Where the statutory process for maintained schools is required and the Local Authority are the decision maker, Officers at the County Council will prepare a report for Cabinet detailing the arguments for and against the change. The anonymised responses of the public consultation will be shared with Cabinet along with the Governors' comments on the issues raised.

If Cabinet decides to support the proposal, the County Council will publish formal Public Notice. The public will then have a final opportunity to comment or object within a four-week timescale laid down in law. Notices are published in the local press and displayed outside the Schools. At the end of the four weeks any feedback or objections will be reported to the Cabinet for a final decision.

### **Related proposals**

Where proposals appear to be 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 very important that all those involved have a say. Please submit your comments by noon on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> November 2021 by completing the online response form available on the school 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:**

Cabinet Member Decision on Change of Age Ranges & Policy: [Cabinet Member Decision on Change of Age Ranges & Policy](#)

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](#)

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