

# WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## RECORD OF MEMBER DELEGATED DECISION

### **Approval of the Change of Age Range of Abbey Park First and Nursery School, the amalgamation with Abbey Park Middle School and alteration to the SEN provision**

<b>Date of Decision</b>	24 December 2024
<b>Decision Maker</b>	Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education
<b>Brief Description of Decision</b>	<b>The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education:</b> <b>approved the change of age range of Abbey Park First School from 3-9 to 2-11, and the amalgamation with Abbey Park Middle School, and to alter the SEN provision from 1 September 2025 as per their delegated authority in relation to prescribed alterations to maintained schools</b>
<b>Reason(s) for Decision</b>	<p>For Abbey Park First School proposals, eighteen (18) responses were received during this representation period: two (2) were in support of the proposal; and sixteen (16) were in objection to the proposals.</p> <p>For Abbey Park Middle School proposals, twenty-three (23) responses were received during this representation period: four (4) were in support of the proposals; and nineteen (19) were in objection to the proposals.</p> <p>Of the responses in support of the proposal, they were received from a member of staff and a resident. The key reasons for support of this proposal are outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) It would create fewer transitions for children;</li><li>b) A dislike of middle schools; and</li><li>c) The education standard at middle schools.</li></ul> <p>The objections received were from members of staff, parent/carers, former pupils and residents. The key reasons for objection to the proposal is outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) A preference for the three tier education system (9 respondents);</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b) Beliefs that middle schools prepare children for high school (6 respondents);</li> <li>c) The impact of the proposals on the funding for the school (9 respondents);</li> <li>d) The timescales of the changes being rushed (4 respondents);</li> <li>e) The impact on the proposals on staff retention and recruitment (2 respondents);</li> <li>f) The impact of the proposals on staff morale / wellbeing (2 respondents); and</li> <li>g) Concerns over the High School Ofsted inspection outcome (one respondent).</li> </ul> <p>The objections received were from members of staff, parent/carers, former pupils and residents. The key reasons for objection to the proposal is outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) A preference for the three tier education system (9 respondents);</li> <li>b) Beliefs that middle schools prepare children for high school (6 respondents);</li> <li>c) The impact of the proposals on the funding for the school (9 respondents);</li> <li>d) The timescales of the changes being rushed (4 respondents);</li> <li>e) The impact on the proposals on staff retention and recruitment (2 respondents);</li> <li>f) The impact of the proposals on staff morale / wellbeing (2 respondents); and</li> <li>g) Concerns over the High School Ofsted inspection outcome (one respondent).</li> </ul> <p>The most common theme of objection was that the current system should not be changed. Others were concerned that the decisions to change to a two tier system was now inevitable, were motivated by finances rather than what is most beneficial for the children involved and would lead to children spending more time in an environment that was not as personalised and nurturing as middle school.</p>
<p><b>Alternative Options Considered and Rejected</b></p>	<p>Between July and September 2021, the Pershore Education Planning Area schools' governing bodies and Multi-Academy Trusts (MATs) confirmed in writing to the Local Authority their agreement / intentions to consult on the change to a two-tier Education Planning area (primary and secondary), seek changes of age range (where necessary) and in the instance of the Middle Schools amalgamate with the First Schools.</p> <p>In April 2022, Cabinet agreed a commitment to support a collective change of age range to align schools in the Pershore EPA to a single, two-tier (primary and secondary)</p>

	<p>system of education, subject to confirmation of the funding necessary to expand Pershore High School.</p> <p>The change of age range is dependent on Pershore High School being expanded to accommodate all Year 7 pupils from all schools within the area. In June 2023 HM Treasury confirmed support for the £22m Department of Education Schools Rebuilding Programme to partially rebuild and expand the school which will deliver the additional Year 7 places required from September 2027.</p> <p>One alternative proposal was provided: this was to extend the years spent at the middle school. This option would not align the Pershore Education Planning Area into a coordinated tier system (primary and secondary), which the majority of respondents are in agreement with.</p> <p>Do not approve – Rejected as the proposals support Abbey Park to align with the other school proposals in the Education Planning Area. 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 11 to 12) curriculum. Across all the Pershore school proposals, 201 responses were received. 74% (193) agreed with the proposals, 25% (65) disagreed with the proposals and 1% (2) were not sure.</p>
<p><b>Any Conflict of Interest declared by a consulted Cabinet Member/ any dispensation granted</b></p>	<p>None</p>
<p><b>Signature of Decision Maker</b></p>	<p>Cllr David Chambers</p>
<p><b>Date of Implementation of Decision</b></p>	<p><i>6 January 2024</i></p>