



Mrs H Thomson and Ann Derbyshire
Inkberrow First School
Main Road
Inkberrow
Worcestershire
WR7 4HH

Our Ref: IFS Change Age 12/2017

15th December 2017

Dear Heather & Ann

Re: Inkberrow First School proposal to extend the age range of the school to accommodate children at Year 5 and Year 6 (change of age range)

I refer to the Avonreach Academy Trust Consultation letter of 1 November 2017, relating to your Governing Body proposal to change the age range of Inkberrow First School to include Year 5 and Year 6 (change of age range by two years). As you are aware the Department for Education (Dfe) publish guidance for Academy Trusts proposing to make significant changes to academy schools. As part of this guidance Academy Trusts **must** consult with the Local Authority on such proposals, therefore thank you for writing to us.

Cabinet approved a policy position in October 2016 that outlines the framework for assessing change of age range proposals. We have used the criteria from this policy to form our response to your consultation:

- a) An open and fair consultation has taken place with parents and other relevant stakeholders and the school can clearly demonstrate how any objections or issues raised will be managed

The LA acknowledge that the school has opened a consultation period of 6 weeks during term time and held a consultation meeting at each school which is in-line with DfE best practice guidance. The consultation document held useful, appropriate information and there was clarity on how and when responses should be made. The LA is aware that parents / carers and other local schools have been included in the consultees. The LA is also aware that Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) have been produced and published on The Avonreach Academy Trust website.

Presently we believe that there are gaps in the information provided as part of the consultation documents (as indicated in points below) and it is also unclear how the responses received from stakeholders during the consultation period will be managed. All objections or issues raised should be considered and answered fully at the end of the consultation period, prior to the final proposal

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decision being submitted to the Regional Schools Commissioner. The LA request to receive a copy of the responses and answers from the Avonreach Academy Trust.

- b) the school has a 'good' or 'outstanding' Ofsted judgement, or can demonstrate how the change would support improvement at the school;

It is noted that the school has been judged as being 'outstanding' by Ofsted in March 2014.

- c) the school can demonstrate the capacity to manage any curriculum changes or has secured appropriate support to do so;

We acknowledge that as part of your FAQ's the school has recognised the implications of this change and its impact on the curriculum, and has identified that there is currently appropriately trained and experienced teachers in post to support this change. Governors should assure themselves that the school can manage this change without any impact on standards and that the appropriate resources are put in place prior to the start of this process.

- d) the school can demonstrate that appropriate facilities, staff and systems will be in place, including how they will manage additional revenue costs;

The Local Authority confirms that there will be no capital or revenue funding to support this process and Governors will need to ensure that any changes can be met from within existing budgets.

The school has acknowledged that additional accommodation will be required and state that planning permission and funding for the extension has been secured. The LA request confirmation from the school that the accommodation will be ready for a Year 5 intake in September 2019.

- e) there should be no detrimental impact on other schools i.e. the proposal should not undermine the quality of education provided by other good or outstanding schools in the area, for example, by creating additional places where there is already surplus capacity;

The DfE in its school organisation guidance and the LA in policy position recognises that change of age range proposals can impact negatively on other schools in the area.

We do not believe your consultation document and FAQ's demonstrate that there will be no detrimental impact on other schools. St Nicholas Middle School (rated 'good') may potentially lose up to 25 pupils transferring from Inkberrow into the Middle School for Year 5 and Year 6. In 2016, 16 pupils transferred from Inkberrow to St Nicholas Middle and in 2017 13 pupils transferred. This is likely to undermine the quality of provision St Nicholas Middle School is able to provide to the remaining pupils and force the Middle School to reduce their PAN

In addition, the linked Avonreach MAT proposals (change of age ranges at Norton Juxta First and Cherry Orchard First) are likely to cause a detrimental impact on the other Middle Schools in the pyramid; and the change of age range at Pershore High School may also cause detrimental impact upon the Middle

Schools in the pyramid. If the High School lowers the age range to include Year 7, some of the Middle Schools will likely lose Year 7 pupils (dependent upon the admissions criteria agreed).

This proposal is not aligned with local pupil place planning and could have a significant impact on other local provision, as well as creating surplus places. Inkberrow's proposal will create an extra 30 places in both Year 5 and Year 6, which will create an oversupply of places in the area. Alongside the other Avonreach proposals, in 2021 we estimate 123 surplus places at Year 5, 132 surplus places at Year 6, and 125 surplus places at Year 7.

Because the local provision is organised in three tiers, the DfE expects schools to work together to ensure appropriate co-ordinated implementation. The LA does not agree that this proposal achieves that.

The Local Authority requests copies of any objections / issues received by Avonreach MAT from other local schools, with responses to how the issues raised will be (or have been) managed.

- f) there is an agreed, clear and practical pathway for children to move on from each school affected by the change;

The Middle Schools at this stage are not proposing any admission changes therefore children could continue to leave Inkberrow at the end of Year 4 and transition to a Middle School into Year 5.

The LA does not believe that the school has demonstrated that an agreed and clear pathway for students leaving Inkberrow at the end of Year 6 is in place. At this stage, there is no guarantee that Pershore High School will have approval to lower the age range to admit students into a Year 7, nor is there an approved admissions policy for the proposed Year 7. Changes to admission arrangements must be consulted upon and agreed before 31st January 2018 for implementation in September 2019. Although the proposed change of age range at Pershore High would not be implemented until 2021, there is no agreed pathway for children to move from Year 6 to Year 7 until these admission arrangements are agreed and published.

- g) funding for any necessary accommodation changes has already been secured;

The school has confirmed that funding for additional accommodation has been secured but that further improvements to accommodation and facilities may be required, such as improvements to the school hall. It is not clear in the consultation document or FAQ's how these additional requirements will be funded.

- h) any reduction in Published Admission Number or change in admission criteria required has been consulted upon and agreed;

The proposal does not indicate a reduction in PAN. The LA expect a PAN of 30 pupils to be implemented for Year 5 & 6 if this proposal proceeds.

- i) appropriate planning permission and any other consent required have been secured;
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The school have confirmed that planning permission for an extension has been granted.

j) individual factors for specified school

School Admissions have advised that Inkberrow do not have an existing published admissions policy on the school website for 2018. The school needs to rectify this aspect.

It is noted that if approved, the school wish this change in age range to be effective from September 2019. Taking into account all the factors noted above and in particular items a, d, e and f; Worcestershire County Council does not support the proposal to change the age range of Inkberrow First School.

The school needs to consider our response and put in place mitigation. In particular, we would seek:

- Evidence of responses / mitigation to all objections or issues raised during the consultation, prior to the final proposal decision being submitted to the Regional Schools Commissioner;
- Evidence of funding resources required to support any recruitment requirements;
- Evidence of how the school believes this proposal will not impact on other schools, particularly St Nicholas Middle;
- Clear evidence of agreed, clear and practical pathways for your pupils beyond Year 6; and
- Published admission arrangements for Inkberrow.

The LA believe that the proposal to change the age range of Inkberrow First School by two years, linked to the other Avonreach MAT change of age range proposals, is a contentious proposal and therefore if to be considered by the Regional Schools Commissioner, should be subject to a full business case.

To ensure transparency in this process the LA will copy this response to the consultation to all other schools in the pyramid and to the Regional Schools Commissioner.

Yours sincerely



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Cabinet Member for Education & Skills

Copied to:
Andrew Longdon – Avonreach Academy Trust Chair of Trustees
Clive Corbett – Avonreach Academy Trust Executive Officer
