



STATUTORY PROPOSALS FOR PRESCRIBED ALTERATIONS TO ST NICHOLAS CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUTARY CONTROLLED (CEVC) INFANT SCHOOL

In accordance with The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, as conferred by sections 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 31, 181 and 183 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006(a) and sections 29 and 537 of the Education Act 1996(b), Medway Council and the Governing Body of St Nicholas Infants propose to make prescribed alterations to St Nicholas Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School to take effect on 1 September 2020.

School details

St Nicholas CEVC Infant School, London Road, Strood, ME2 3HU

Local Authority details

Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, ME4 4TR

Description of alterations

1. The 'Extension of the upper age range' from 7 to 11 (proposed by the Governing Body)
2. The 'Enlargement of the premises' (proposed by Medway Council)

The proposal will result in extending St Nicholas from an infant to a primary school. The change will lead, over time, to an additional 90 places becoming available at the school.

The yearly intake admission number (PAN) will reduce from 40 to 30 pupils from September 2020, and those children admitted then will remain at the school for the entirety of their primary education.

An extension to the premises is required to provide sufficient physical capacity for the increased numbers of children.

These proposals will be complemented by changes to Gordon Infants and Gordon Juniors which will be consulted upon separately by the Thinking Schools Academy Trust.

Background

St Nicholas Infant School currently provides Reception and Key Stage 1 education for children from the age of four until they transfer into junior school at age 7. Normally, children from St Nicholas transfer to Gordon Juniors, along with pupils from Gordon Infants. To complement the change at St Nicholas, Gordon Juniors intends to lower their PAN to 90, and Gordon Infants will raise theirs to 90, all from September 2020.

Currently, St Nicholas provides education for 120 children, if the proposals are implemented the capacity at the school would increase to 210.

Why is there a need to change St Nicholas from an infant to a primary school?

At age 7, pupils from St Nicholas transfer to a junior school. Children from St Nicholas generally transfer to Gordon Juniors. However, St Nicholas is a Church of England school, and Gordon Juniors is not a faith school. Some parents would prefer the option of continuing their child's education at a Church of England School. The pupils are only able to choose an alternative junior school if places are available in nearby primary schools.

Children at Gordon Infants also transfer to Gordon Juniors, joining those from St Nicholas Infants. The children from both infant schools have to get used to the combined impact of the transition from infant to junior, and the joining together of children from two different schools. If St Nicholas becomes a primary school, then children will be able to stay at the school for the whole of their primary education. There would be no transition from infant to junior, so there would be less disruption, as well a seamless education pathway both for children from St Nicholas Infants and Gordon Infants.

As part of the change to St Nicholas, Gordon Infants would raise their PAN from 60 to 90, and Gordon Juniors would lower theirs from 100 to 90 to match. Combined with the change at St Nicholas, this would result in an extra 140 school places in Strood. This will help to meet expected demand from additional housing schemes planned for Strood in the coming years.

Children at Gordon Infants would continue to Gordon Juniors, and the two Gordon schools would operate as if they were a primary school. The two Gordon schools are part of the same trust, and share teaching and management styles. Therefore there would be a continuous journey for the children throughout their primary education.

How the proposals would benefit Medway

In January 2013 Ofsted carried out an inspection at the school, and gave a rating of 'outstanding' across all aspects of the report. The proposals are in line with current local and national policy, which allows good and outstanding schools to expand.

The proposals, by enabling children at both St Nicholas and the Gordon schools to spend their primary education years at one school, mean that the pupils will benefit from a cohesive, seamless, and co-ordinated primary education journey without any transitions. It is expected that the proposals will result in improved outcomes for the pupils who attend St Nicholas CEVC School and the Gordon Federation Schools.

Furthermore, there are a number of ongoing and proposed housing developments in the area. These housing schemes will undoubtedly add further pressure to primary school places in the Strood area.

Medway Council has a duty to provide sufficient school places and the additional places resulting from this change will help towards ensuring that the obligation is met.

The proposals will increase the balance of faith based places as well as improving parental choice for those parents who want a full faith based primary education for their children.

Impact upon other schools

The proposals are designed to be complementary with those at Gordon Infants and Juniors. Therefore, none of the three schools will be disadvantaged by the changes. The proposals will, over time, add an extra 140 school places in Strood, which will benefit the

area by meeting demand from planned and future developments. No negative impact upon other schools in the area is expected.

Funding for the scheme

Additional classrooms and some internal reconfiguration and upgrade will be required to ensure facilities are sufficient and age appropriate at St Nicholas CEVC School. This will be financed using the central government basic need grant, which is a fund for the creation of additional school capacity to ensure that sufficient school places are available in each local area. Further funding as required will come from developer contributions for new housing schemes in the area. This is where developers of new housing schemes pay a contribution to the Council to assist in the enhancement and provision of essential community facilities.

A full planning consultation will form part of the physical expansion process, and interested stakeholders will be able to make representations at that time too. That process is likely to take place during the early part of 2020.

Next steps

By 21 July 2019 any person may support, object to or make comments on the proposals by sending them to FREEPOST RRUY-ZBTJ-CZZC, School Organisation (Post bag 75), Level 4, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, ME4 4TR, or by email to prim.reorg@medway.gov.uk