

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
Date:	28 September 2011
Title:	Manor Infant School, Holbury – proposed change to voluntary controlled (Church of England) status
Reference:	3165
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. The purpose of this paper is to seek authority to publish public notices, required to implement the governing body's proposal to change the status of Manor Infant School, Holbury from community to voluntary controlled (Church of England).

2. Contextual information

2.1. The governing body of Manor Infant School, Holbury, wishes to formalise its identity as a school with an explicitly Christian ethos and collective worship, in association with the Church of England at parochial and diocesan levels, whilst retaining its openness with the local population as a whole. Although already affiliated with Winchester Diocese, it is felt that this relationship would be strengthened by a formal change in status.

2.2. On his decision day on 6 June 2011, the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services approved the commencement of consultations, jointly with Winchester Diocese, on the closure of the existing school and the establishment of a new voluntary controlled Church of England Infant School in its premises, with effect from 1 September 2012.

2.3. This procedure is necessary to enable a community school to acquire a "religious character".

3. Consultations

3.1. Full details of the proposal were set out in a consultation paper issued to parents, staff and governors at Manor Infant School, other local schools, trade

unions, the district and parish council, the local County Councillor (Alexis McEvoy), Julian Lewis MP and other statutory consultees, inviting comments.

- 3.2. A public consultation meeting was held on 28 June 2011. This was attended by 7 governors, 9 members of staff and 9 parents. The Diocesan Director of Education and an officer from the County Council explained the proposal in detail and answered questions, particularly with regard to the position of current staff and pupils, future admission policy and the effect on the religious education curriculum and collective worship. With one exception, no adverse comments were expressed.
- 3.3. A drop-in session was held on 5 July 2011, attended by two governors and one parent, who had not been able to attend the public meeting, and who expressed her support for the proposal.
- 3.4. Written comments were invited and received from 15 parents (including parent governors), 3 other governors, 4 members of staff, 8 other members of the local community. Of these, 24 agreed with the proposal, 6 neither agreed nor disagreed and 2 disagreed. Of those who disagreed, one parent felt that "religions should not be worshipped at school" and that focusing on one religion is wrong. The other considered that the children already follow Christian faith at a suitable level.
- 3.5. Fawley Parish Council responded that this is a decision for the school to take after taking due consideration of the pros and cons.
- 3.6. Any further responses will be reported at the Decision Day.
- 3.7. These consultations met the requirements of the statutory regulations. Copies of the consultation document and all responses will be available on the Decision Day and can be inspected in the Children's Services Department office.

4. Finance and staffing

- 4.1. This proposal will not have financial implications as there are no differences in the financial arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools
- 4.2. The proposal will not have implications for staff terms and conditions as the County Council will remain the employer.
- 4.3. As these proposals will give rise to a "new" voluntary controlled school, the County Council will have a duty to convey the site of the school buildings and play areas to trustees, on behalf of the school. However, in the event of any future disposal, the statutory basis for transferring the property will protect the County Council's interest in any sale proceeds.

5. Governance

- 5.1. If the proposals are approved, a new governing body will be established, reflecting the school's new status.

6. Statutory Proposals

- 6.1. In order to effect this proposal, it will be necessary to publish public notices, for the County Council to cease to maintain the school and for the Diocese to establish a new school in its premises. Under current legislation, it is necessary for the Diocese to seek an exemption from the Secretary of State, from the need for a “school competition” to establish a new school. Application has been made accordingly and the Secretary of State’s response is awaited. The recommendation below is, therefore, conditional on that consent being received.
- 6.2. Once the public notices have been published, there is a six week period for objections and other representations. The final decision will then be made by the County Council in accordance with the procedure approved by Cabinet on 21 May 2007 (by the Executive Member if no objections are received, or by Cabinet if there are objections).

7. Recommendation

- 7.1. That, subject to approval being given by the Secretary of State to the application by the diocese to make the proposal without a need for a “school competition”, approval be given to the publication of public notices under Sections 10 and 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, jointly with Winchester Diocese, for the closure of Manor Infant School, Holbury and the establishment of a new voluntary controlled Church of England infant school in its premises, with effect from 1 September 2012.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:**Links to the Corporate Strategy**

This proposal does not link to the Corporate Strategy but, nevertheless, requires a decision because the proposal has to follow a statutory process.

Other Significant Links**Links to previous Member decisions:**

<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
Manor Infant School, Holbury – proposed change to voluntary controlled (Church of England) status	2865	6 June 2011

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
Copies of consultation document and responses and Section 10 application	Children's Services Department file

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

- 1.1. As the admission policy for voluntary controlled schools complies with equalities legislation these proposals will not give rise to any equalities issues.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

- 2.1. No impact has been identified.

3. Climate Change:

- a) How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?
- b) How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

This proposal will not have any impact on these issues.