

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
Date:	6 June 2011
Title:	Manor Infant School, Holbury – proposed change to voluntary controlled (Church of England) status
Reference:	2865
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 commence consultations on the governing body's proposal to change the status of Manor Infant School from community to voluntary controlled (Church of England).

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. Manor Infant School, Holbury, is a one form entry infant school (90 Places) with 76 children on roll in January 2011. The school has been affiliated to the Winchester Diocese for five years, which means that the governors have resolved to work in partnership with the Diocese and use its advisory services without actually being formally a Church of England school. It enjoys a close working relationship with the clergy and people of Fawley parish, and two core church members are on the governing body.

3. The proposed change in status

- 3.1. With the support of the Diocese and the local parish, the governing body now wishes to embark on consultation with a view to the publication of notices to formally become a voluntary controlled Church of England school. The school now wishes to formalise and develop 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 to the local population as a whole, and continue to make full use of local authority and diocesan support.
- 3.2. The process of change would entail linked proposals, by the County Council to close the school and simultaneously by the Diocese to open a new school

in the existing premises. This could be achieved from September 2012. The governors have stated that they do not wish to do anything to weaken the school's relationship with the County Council, whose support and services they value highly, which is why they are seeking a change to take on a church identity in this way, rather than seeking trust or academy status. Initial soundings indicate a good measure of support from staff and parents.

- 3.3. The Diocese's intention is that, following initial consultation, it would seek an exemption (under section 10 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) from the need for a competition for what would technically be a new school. However, the Diocese and governors also intend that, in the unlikely event of the DfE not giving the exemption, the process of change would be aborted entirely for the time being.

4. Procedure

- 4.1. Under current legislation, the procedure to effect a change in category to voluntary controlled and to gain a religious character requires the local authority to cease to maintain the school and a promoter (in this case the Diocese) to propose the establishment of a new school. This will require the Diocese to seek consent from the Secretary of State to publish proposals without the need to go through a "school competition". This would be sought in the period between the local consultations and publication of public notices.
- 4.2. The Education Bill currently passing through parliament will change some of the procedures for the establishment of "new" schools. As the impact of such changes is not yet known, the governing body and Diocese have agreed to abort this current process if either the Secretary of State is not willing to give consent to proceed under current arrangements, or if the proposal is incompatible with the new legislative framework.
- 4.3. In the first instance, it will be necessary for the County Council and Winchester Diocese to jointly consult staff, parents and other interested parties. The outcome will be reported to the Executive Member before public notices are published. 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).

5. Finance and staffing

- 5.1. This proposal will not have financial implications as there are no differences in the financial arrangements for community and voluntary controlled schools. Similarly, there will be no impact on staff at the school.
- 5.2. 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.

6. Governance

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

7. Recommendation

- 7.1. That approval be given to joint consultations with Winchester Diocese on 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.

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.)

Document

Location

None

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.