



EQUA Mead
Learning Trust

Public Consultation – Thursday 19th December
2025 – Thursday 30th January 2025

Proposed Change of Age Range of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School

Introduction

This brief document helps to explain the proposals and the steps of this process, including:

- the background to proposals;
- who can propose and decide on changes;
- what is being proposed;
- why it is being proposed;
- the impact of the proposals;
- how and when the proposals if agreed would be implemented;
- who is being consulted;
- how to submit a consultation response; and
- what happens at the end of the consultation period.

If you require any additional information not included in this document to enable you to make a response, please contact p.skipp@equamead.org or the school:

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Address | St Nicholas Church of England Primary School The Leaze Bromham Chippenham Wiltshire SN15 2EY |
| Email | admin@st-nicholasvc.wilts.sch.uk |
| Phone number | 01380850391 |

Have your say...

It is very important that all those involved or have an interest have a say, we welcome your views.

If you have any questions or would like to comment on the proposal then please contact the school office on via their email address: admin@st-nicholasvc.wilts.sch.uk

If you would prefer to represent your view on paper, we would ask that drop it into the school or post your response.

The three-week consultation period commences on Thursday 19th December and closes at noon on Thursday 30th January. It is very important that all those wishing to respond to these proposals do so within this timeframe.

Yours sincerely,



Clare Kitts
Headteacher



Ross Phillips
Chair of Local
Governing Body



Paul Skipp
EQUA Mead CEO

School Details

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|--|---|--------------------------------|---------|
| Name and Address: | St Nicholas Church of England Primary School The Leaze Bromham Chippenham Wiltshire SN15 2EY | | |
| Status: | Academy | | |
| Ofsted Rating / Date: | N/A School Converted to Academy on 1 st December | | |
| Current age range: | 4 to 11 | Proposed age range: | 2 to 11 |
| Total pupil capacity as of 1 st September 2024: | 90 | Proposed total pupil capacity: | 120 |
| Number of new places requested | 30 Nursery places | | |

Proposal

EQUA Mead Learning Trust is seeking approval to extend the age range of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School to include provision for up to 30 children aged 2-4. This change would align with our commitment to providing high-quality education and care, supporting families, and ensuring the best start in life for all children within our community.

There is going to be significant investment in a newly developed Nursery provision, specifically designed to accommodate younger children. The dedicated space will be well-equipped and complemented by ample outdoor areas, creating an ideal environment for early years education.

Rationale for the Change

- Enhanced Early Years Provision:** Extending the age range to include 2- and 3-year-olds allows us to provide consistent and high-quality Early Years education. Research consistently shows that high-quality early childhood education has a significant positive impact on children's social, emotional, and cognitive development. This early foundation contributes to improved academic outcomes and personal growth throughout a child's schooling journey.
- Strengthening the School's Role in the Community:** By incorporating younger children, St Nicholas Primary can become a central hub for families, fostering stronger relationships between the school and the wider community. Parents will benefit from having a single, trusted institution to support their child's development from an earlier age.
- Improved Transition to Primary Education:** Offering education for 2- to 4-year-olds will create a seamless transition into Reception, reducing anxiety for both children and parents. Children who start their educational journey at St Nicholas from the age of 2 will already be familiar with the school environment, staff, and routines, fostering a sense of security and readiness to learn.

4. **Meeting Local Demand:** There is demand for accessible, high-quality early years education in the local area. Expanding our provision would address this need, ensuring that local families have access to excellent care and education without needing to seek alternative providers.
5. **Enhancing the School's Sustainability:** Broadening the age range can contribute to the school's long-term sustainability. Increased enrolment from younger age groups can bolster the school's roll numbers and ensure that more families remain with the school for the entirety of their children's primary education.

Changing the age range of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School to 2-11 represents an exciting opportunity to enrich the lives of children and families in our community. It reflects the school's commitment to courage, hope, love and friendship in education. By investing in early years provision, we can create a stronger, more cohesive educational journey for our learners and ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive from the earliest possible stage.

Quality of provision and breadth of curriculum

Our staff are passionate about Early Education and supporting children to have the very best start to their learning journey at school. All teachers at St Nicholas Church of England Primary School are qualified to teach across the whole primary age range and have previous experience of working in both early years settings and schools offering full primary provision.

Our provision will provide a high-quality teacher-led nursery experience. Irresistible opportunities will be provided through play and adult-led activities, making full use of rich and well-resourced learning environments indoors and outdoors. Our vision is that all children are happy, thrive and succeed during their first years at school. A carefully planned and sequenced curriculum, informed by the children's interests, will ensure children are active participants in their learning and development. An enabling environment will allow them to have early learning experiences through play-based collaborative interactions and exciting provocations.

The curriculum will cover the seven 'areas of learning' in the Early Years Foundation Stage, ensuring a carefully progressive programme across Nursery and Reception. The 'characteristics of effective learning' will underpin everything we do and embrace all areas of learning and development. By fostering positive learning attitudes, we will lay the foundations for success throughout schooling.

In addition, the school will work closely with other EQUA Mead schools to develop and share best practice in nursery provision, to ensure the quality of education is up to date and of high quality.

The proposed changes will have no detrimental impact on the quality of education for any of its pupils. In addition, despite the changes, the school will benefit from further specialist facilities.

Who can propose and decide the changes?

Expansion & Change of Age Range

Academy schools may propose to expand their physical capacity and/or change the age range of their school (including adding or removing a nursery provision or sixth form provision) by submitting a Tier 1 application to the Department for Education.

The DfE Regions Group will review the application and either approve or if risks or concerns are identified escalate to Tier 2 or Tier 3. Tier 3 applications can be determined by the Regional Director

who may seek the assistance of their Advisory Board. Where the change is contentious or particularly complex, applications may be escalated to the relevant minister or Secretary of State for a decision.

The Impact of the Proposal

EQUA Mead Learning Trust is committed to supporting schools; these proposals are expected to provide the following benefits to community of St Nicholas Church of England Primary School:

- every child has an education journey that gives them the best chance to succeed;
- schools are supported to deliver good education outcomes in a stable and known education system; and
- schools to deliver a full curriculum and remain sustainable and financially viable.

Accommodation Required

No additional accommodation is required to support this change, however, specific buildings on the school site will be renovated to house the Nursery. There is already guaranteed external capital investment to ensure this takes place.

How and when if approved would the proposals be implemented?

If approved by the Department for Education, we aim to implement this change from September 2025, providing an even broader foundation of support and education for children in our community.

What happens next?

How the decision will be made

At the end of the consultation period, EQUA Mead Learning Trust will consider any issues that have been raised before deciding whether to publish or submit statutory proposals to make changes.

The Trust, in partnership with St Nicholas Church of England Primary School, will consider evidence from various sources to reach a considered view on the merits of the proposal, including the following factors:

- Response to the public consultation;
- Quality of education provision at the school;
- Ability of the school to manage the proposed change to support the continued improvements at the school;
- Demand for places at the school and in the local area; and
- Funding to cover the capital costs of the proposed change has been secured, and that there are no issues with the school's current budget and/or finances.

Submission of formal proposals

The proposers will take note of issues raised during the consultation. At the conclusion of the consultation period, a decision will be made whether to submit a formal proposal to the decision makers, requesting their support.

Regional Schools Commissioner Decisions

For Academy schools, the Academy Trust Board will then submit a Tier 1 application to the DfE Regions Group alongside any requests to vary school admission arrangements.

The DfE will consider a range of factors and make a balanced judgement when deciding whether to approve or reject a proposal. The DfE may also defer the approval pending further evidence. Where proposed changes are particularly controversial and could attract adverse public or press attention; the DfE may choose to escalate such proposed changes to the Secretary of State for a decision.

Finally

It is important that we hear the views of our stakeholders, therefore, please take time to share you views with us at : admin@st-nicholasvc.wilts.sch.uk