

PROPOSAL TO CHANGE THE AGE RANGE OF: Langtree Community School and Nursery Unit

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School and LA details:

Langtree Community School and Nursery Unit
Fore Street
Torrington
Devon
EX38 8NF

LA: Devon County Council, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QD

Change of Age Range

Devon County Council and Langtree Community School and Nursery Unit are proposing to change the age range of the school from 3-11 to 2-11 years of age from 15 April 2024. The school has a published admission number (PAN) of 12. There are currently 6 Reception children.

Evidence of demand

The school currently has a Foundation Stage Unit for nursery aged children between 3 and 4 years old and Reception Year children. The Reception Year is the final year of the Early Years Foundation Stage before primary education begins with Key Stage 1 in Year 1.

There is demand in the area for provision for 2-year-olds. There are predicted to be 5 children aged 2 years old in Summer 2024 within the designated area of the school. There are 2 early years providers in Langtree: the nursery in the school and a funded childminder.

Additionally, in light of the Spring 2023 Budget announcement on the expansion of early years entitlements and associated funding, DCC is projecting an increase in demand for 2-year places. The new entitlements are being introduced in phases:

- From April 2024, most working parents of 2-year-olds can access 15 hours per week entitlement; this is in addition to the more disadvantaged families that will continue to get 15 hours a week of funded provision.
- From September 2024, most working parents of children aged 9 months up to 3-years-old can access 15 hours per week.

- From September 2025, most working parents of children aged 9 months up to compulsory school age can access 30 hours of funded childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year.

The 2-year-old children in the Foundation Stage Unit would be registered on the school roll. However, parents/carers of children in the Foundation Stage Unit will still need to make a separate application to Devon County Council for a place in the reception class.

Objectives:

Extending the age range of the school will help meet demand in the local area. The Governing Body wishes to ensure that the school supports the local area by offering high quality early education and childcare.

Langtree Community Primary School and Nursery Unit is a small school and is classified as a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2022 (Rural village in a sparse setting). Consideration is given to lowering the age range in schools where there is capacity to do so and to integrate Nursery and Reception provision. Integrating provision in this way has benefits to all children's learning and means that all resources can be shared making it a more cost-effective way of enabling provision in areas where it would otherwise not be viable to have group based early years provision. Children who attend the Foundation Stage Unit are more likely to apply for a place in the Reception Class as the transition into school is seamless. There are currently 6 children in Reception against a Published Admission Number of 12. There will be no reduction in the number of places for 3-, 4- or 5-year-olds to accommodate 2-year-olds.

Enabling children to start in the Foundation Stage Unit at two-years-old will remove a transition point for some children. Those more disadvantaged children who are eligible for 2-year-old funding may currently go to different providers to access the funded time that they are eligible to receive, as will those parents who need childcare so they can work. They may then come back to the school at age 3 into the nursery or at age 4 into the reception class.

Being able to offer places from 2-years-old will provide greater consistency and continuity for children before starting at school and enable staff to make a more significant impact and identify and address children's needs well before they start in the reception class.

Education standards

The school is an Ofsted 'Good' School (July 2023). The Ofsted report states that pupils are motivated to learn and are respectful of their peers. Children in the early years learn to take turns and to communicate their understanding of the world very well. Children are well prepared for the next stage in their education. There is a calm, harmonious learning environment in lessons and around the school. Staff have very positive relationships with pupils, so they feel secure and cared for.

Inspection reports are available via: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The school is federated with Bishops Tawton Primary School, making up the Two Rivers Federation. Bishops Tawton has a successful pre-school on site which takes children from age 2 upwards.

The effect on other Schools, Academies, and educational institutions in the area:

Other schools, academies and local early years providers have been consulted with and no responses have been received from them. The local authority does not believe the proposal will adversely impact other early years' provision, schools, or academies in the local area.

Project Costs

No capital funding is required.

Planning consent is not required.

It is envisaged that this proposal will be cost neutral as the Early Years funding will be received where children are eligible and by parental subscription where they are not.

Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation:

The proposal, if approved, will be implemented with effect from 15 April 2024.

Effect on existing pupils

The proposal will not affect the capacity of the school, nor the Published Admission Number for school aged children and will not put pressure on existing classroom space. The maximum physical capacity of the school is 120 places. There are currently 77 pupils on roll including children in the nursery. Please see below for further information on the effect on existing pupils.

Informal Consultation

An informal consultation took place between 6 September 2023 to 18 October 2023.

Six responses were received during the consultation stage: 1 in support and 5 others with objections/concerns.

Concerns were raised about the impact of 2-year-olds attending the Foundation Stage Unit and the disruption this may cause to the older children. Some respondents felt that because of the level of care and attention that 2-year-olds require this would have a negative impact on the older children. Some respondents felt that because 2-year-olds require a much higher

level of care with nappy changes and constant supervision that this will take staff away from the current learners.

Some respondents felt that the current structured and calm environment will become more chaotic, louder and less accessible for the older learners. Concerns raised about space being taken up in the classroom for a sleep area for 2-year-olds and adequate toilet facilities. Some respondents feel that the 2-year-olds should be in a separate space with scheduled and shorter periods of integration with the older children.

There were also concerns raised about a recent Stay and Play Session where much younger children were invited to attend with their parents and carers. One respondent felt that the older children were having to be reminded regularly to be careful of the younger children who, for example, were toddling into bike paths or walking through the middle of ball games and noise levels were higher. Play may be restricted for the older children with the removal of scissors, play money, marbles and other small items that may cause injury or a choking hazard.

A couple of consultation responses state the school's capacity is 84 and the number on roll is 90 so the school is technically already over capacity. Concerns were raised that a full risk assessment and cost benefit analysis had not been made. One respondent said that free childcare for 2-year-olds does not come into effect until April 2024 so asked why the rush to accept children of this age from January 2024 when so few people commit to early paid entry.

One respondent felt that the consultation did not give adequate time to research and take advice on their consultation submissions with a January 2024 implementation unrealistic and leaving parents and guardians in a severe state of stress not knowing whether they need to seek alternative schooling. The respondent also felt there was inadequate information in the consultation document, no pros or cons were made available, and it does not feel that a credible or meaningful consultation has taken place. Concerns over no capital being provided and a lack of information about revenue funding. The respondent felt that this proposal would be a material alteration to teaching staff terms and conditions. One respondent felt the Reception Class should have been consulted with.

One respondent felt that capital should be provided by DCC for a purpose-built extension.

Several responses stated that they had no issue with the change in age range, once the correct measures have been taken or the 2-year-olds are in a separate space. A few responses also stated that they were very happy with the school and had no issues with the way it is currently run and could not wish for a safer nicer school.

In response, at the school, all children in the Early Years and Reception Class are taught according to age related expectations and have access to suitable learning provision that is led by experienced teachers working across the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The stay and play session was not a true reflection of the provision within the Foundation Stage Unit as there are expected to be only one or two two-year-olds in any session. The ratio of qualified adults to children that must be in place allows for work with individual children as well as different groupings. As take up increases additional staff will be allocated. There is currently one member of staff undertaking an Early Years qualification for this purpose. The ratio of adults to children will not fall below 1:5 and will often be 1:3 when an additional adult is available. Ratios will remain low (the statutory requirement is 1:5, but there must always be two staff available with specific Early Years qualifications to meet the statutory

staffing requirements). The physical indoor and outdoor space is zoned and will be adapted to suit the needs of all children within the Foundation Stage Unit. There is a popular and successful model of two-year-old provision in the school's partner school and very experienced staff to support.

In 2015 the Department for Education made it possible for schools to admit two-year-olds on to the roll of their school without the need to separately register with Ofsted and, subject to a statutory process. In recent years, numerous schools in Devon have lowered their age range to take 2-year-olds, with many smaller schools establishing a Foundation Stage Unit. It is a popular and successful model. There are currently 115 schools in Devon that take 2-year-olds.

In response to the points made about the consultation stage regarding a lack of information and short timescale: the informal consultation has been carried out in line with the DfE's School Organisation guidance and in line with the Cabinet Office's guidance on Consultation Principles. Please also see section 7 of the published Impact Assessment at: <https://www.devon.gov.uk/impact/langtree-community-school-and-nursery-change-of-age-range/>

The school has a capacity (based on PAN (12)) for 84 children, but the maximum physical capacity is 120. The capacity figure on the DfE's Get Information about Schools is showing the capacity based on PAN (12x7). The number on roll at the school is currently 77.

An early years financial plan, that considered the impact on the school finances of taking 2-year-olds, was approved by Devon County Council's School Finance Consultant prior to proceeding to informal consultation on this proposal. There are predicted to be 5 children aged 2 years old in Summer 2024 within the designated area of the school.

The physical space/fabric of the building should not need to be changed to enable two-year-olds to be accommodated as there is no difference in the requirements of a 2 year from those of a 3-, 4- and 5-year-old. For example, a sleep area is not needed, but there should be an area where any children can be quiet and rest.

The teaching staff's terms and conditions are not altered by this proposal. Nursery practitioners are allocated key children and carry out planning and assessment along with the class teachers. Nursery practitioners will be supporting the two-year-olds.

The [EYFS statutory framework for group and school based providers \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/604222/eyfs-statutory-framework-for-group-and-school-based-providers.pdf) requires that

For children aged two:

- There must be at least one member of staff for every five children
- At least one member of staff must hold an approved level 3 qualification.
- At least half of all staff must hold an approved level 2 qualification.

In a maintained school or non-maintained special school, where the two-year-olds are pupils, staff must additionally be under the direction and supervision of a qualified or nominated teacher when carrying out specified work (as laid out in the Education (Specified Work) (England) Regulations 2012). Specified work broadly encompasses lesson (or curriculum) planning, delivering lessons, assessing the development, progress and attainment of pupils and reporting on the latter. The headteacher must be satisfied that the staff have the skills, expertise and experience needed to carry out the work and determine the appropriate level of direction and supervision.

There will be planned activities for two-year-olds that they can access at times that quieter sessions may be needed for the older children. There is outside space, the garden, hall and

the study suite that can be used for these times. Sessions when all ages mix together will be scheduled and planned with numbers/ratios managed carefully.

Children in the Foundation Stage Unit are already grouped and taught according to age by the class teacher and/or nursery practitioners with an individual personalised approach and the appropriate child: adult ratios as per the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Small parts – games with small parts and scissors will be distributed safely with areas sectioned off for targeted learning. Two-year-olds will not be taught alongside Reception children but they will share some of the space for independent learning and other activities when not in teacher led inputs. The quality of teaching and learning for Reception children will be protected and they will continue to have teacher led and independent learning activities that are carefully planned and delivered to meet the Early Years Framework and in preparation for Year 1.

Response to formal representation period

You can object to or comment on the proposals by:

Emailing: schoolconsultations@devon.gov.uk

Writing to: Shona Meek, Strategic Planning Children's Services, Room 120, Devon County Council, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4QD.

by the **closing date 8 February 2024**

We encourage all stakeholders who previously responded at the informal consultation stage to respond to the formal representation period.

All responses will be considered by Devon County Council and will be shared with the school's leadership team and governors, unless you request otherwise. Please see Devon County Council's Privacy Notice: [Privacy Notice](#)

<https://www.devon.gov.uk/privacy/privacy-notices/privacy-notice-for-representations-to-school-organisation-statutory-consultations/>

Please note that all responses will be properly considered by Devon County Council and the Governing Body, but we will not send individual responses to any specific points raised.