

# Charlesworth School

Long Lane, Charlesworth, Derbyshire, SK13 5ET

Chair: Mrs D. Phillips  
Vice Chair: Mrs M Barton  
Clerk: Mrs Sue Willett



Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2019

## Additional Detail Outlining The Proposed Changes At Charlesworth School

The governors would like to thank all of those people who have replied to the consultation process and to assure you that all comments and concerns will be discussed and included in any future plans. We are aware that the short notice given, and the skeleton outline of the proposal has caused some concerns. The consultation process was carried out at the request of the local authority as a first step and the timescales were determined by a recognised procedure. However, Charlesworth governors would like to see this as an on-going conversation (or engagement) to ensure that all involved feel that they have had the opportunity to be heard and indeed to influence the final outcome where possible.

As for the limited amount of information in the original proposal; it was not until a meeting with the local authority just before the half term that we could confirm the exact nature of the proposed changes at Charlesworth School. Now those discussion have concluded, we can give a more detailed outline of why the changes were proposed, what the planned reorganisation might look like and what the intended impact will be. Over time, we will seek to continue this engagement and discussion process through a range of media e.g., written, social media or face to face.

### Why? (What is the context for the intended changes?)

Most of you will be aware that Charlesworth School has become very popular with parents across the whole of the Glossop area. This success is a result of significant improvements over the past few years but we are strongly aware that the key reason parents choose our school is that we provide high quality relationships in a village school where the class sizes are relatively small. These are the distinctive characteristics of our school that we must protect.

We have been aware that the increasing numbers entering the school might have a negative impact on class sizes over the next few years. For example; if current numbers remain the same, there will be 38 children in Y3 and Y4 in a couple of years. The obvious answer would be to increase staffing and the number of classes on the Town Lane Site. However, the current crisis in school funding makes this very difficult to do without setting increasingly deficit budgets (something that the local authority will not allow us to do). It might be suggested that we simply cap the number of children in our Reception intake (thus leading to a reduction in



parental choice) or to allow for increases in class size. We believe that both of these approaches will make Charlesworth School a less attractive school to prospective and current parents. Therefore, we need to plan strategically for a long-term sustainable school structure. Increasing income is one of the few mechanisms that will allow us to achieve this and we believe that developing a pre-school cohort will also enhance the provision at Charlesworth School.

While the governors see this proposal as a creative and exciting way to continue to move the school forward' they also recognise the importance of proceeding as a whole school community in a way that engages the support of parents, pupils and staff. In order to encourage this dialogue, the outline describes the current proposal in more details in order to clarify some key points and hopefully to allay some fears. Of course, there may still be questions and concerns that we will need to listen to but hopefully these will be in the context of accurate information about the intended changes.

### **What? (What are the intended changes to school organisation and when will these happen?)**

Firstly, to clarify an important point regarding timescales. The governors have secured an agreement from the local authority for a budget that allows us to extend the timescales for proposed changes. As a result, **it is not intended to introduce any of the changes in class organisation until September 2020.**

This will change the proposed class organisation on the Town Lane Site as the different year groups vary in size. More importantly, it will give the school enough time to make any physical changes on both sites and to ensure that parents, pupils and staff are fully engaged in the process. The proposed changes are outlined below:-

#### Long Lane Site

Over the next twelve months, the school and the local authority will be improving the site with regard to security, safeguarding and learning provision. For example, this may involve improvements in entry/exit mechanisms, additional fencing and secure spaces, improved toileting facilities and creating a fully resourced continuous outdoor play area in the current infant playground.

Currently, Year Two are accommodated on the Long Lane Site but from September 2020, these children will be located on the Town Lane site. Miss Streeter and Mrs Davies will move with the pupils to form a single-age Year Two class (see the Town Lane changes for the intended class structures).

An additional full-time teacher will be employed on the Long Lane Site along with an additional two full time (30hrs per week) teaching assistants. This will mean the total staff team on the Long Lane Site will be two teachers and four full time (30 hours) teaching assistants under the guidance of Miss Barton who has taught an Early Years/Year One Class for many years and whose provision has been recognised as outstanding by many professionals.

In September 2020, the school will receive up to ten pre-school pupils (some will be existing siblings and others new to the school). In addition to the Reception and Year One, cohorts this will make around 55 pupils in what is intended to be an Early Years/Key Stage One unit. This may be something that parents are not familiar with but the organisation of pupils in an Early Years Unit is recognised by the local authority as the best model of provision for children of this age. The governors believe that the changes that we need to make are well within our capacity. Of course, there will be considerations about provision for younger

children and the staff are committed to ensure that the same high-quality provision exists for current children as well as our new pre-school cohort.

We will be giving parents of existing pupils a number of opportunities to discuss the organisation of the Early Years/Key Stage One Unit over the next twelve months. These might involve such things as the organisation of teaching and learning, how progress is assessed, how the team works to develop family groups (small pastoral and teaching groups of around thirteen pupil) or about the value of continuous outdoor provision (instead of a fixed outdoor play time). You will be given information about these opportunities as they are planned.

### Town Lane Site

The incorporation of Year Two into the Town Lane site will require additional classroom accommodation. The governors are currently exploring what form this will take and are working to ensure the improved accommodation is in place for Sept 2020 at the latest. Initially, this is likely to be a temporary classroom sited next to the existing building. However, the school is already in discussion with the local authority about long term plans to build a permanent classroom extension as it is likely that there may be a need to increase to four classes on the Long Lane Site over the next four or five years.

Class sizes of less than about twenty pupils are not viable but we are committed to ensure that no class has more than thirty pupils in Key Stage Two. In Key Stage One, this is a statutory requirement. As the numbers in older cohorts is variable, there will need to be flexible class arrangements over the next few years in order to prevent the need for an additional teacher/class. In September 2020, this would result in three classes Y2 (22 children), Y3/4 (29 children) and Y5/6 (23 children). However, the following year this would consist of Y2/3 (29 children), Y3/4 (28 children) and Y5/6 (27 children).

Of course, numbers do fluctuate within the year as some families move out of the area and others request in-year places. Hence these are provisional arrangements and will need reviewing closer to the time. Eventually, if the current high demand continues, we will be working towards four classes of approximately 25 pupils on the Town Lane site.

At Charlesworth, we already have to make some decisions about which class is most appropriate for Year One children as we currently run a mixed Reception/Year One class and a Year One/Year Two class. In all cases we consider each child as an individual and place them accordingly. **Please be aware that at our school there is no concept of moving a child up or holding them back.** For example, it is not unusual to have very able Year One children in Miss Barton's class. Our decisions are based on a range of considerations such as their emotional readiness for a more formal classroom environment, their friendship groups and what helps them to learn best. The same approach will be applied to children on the Town Lane site when organising classes each year.

### **For What? (What will the intended impact of these changes be?)**

The key long-term impact is to maintain a thriving and sustainable school structure that will enable Charlesworth School to continue to improve and protect the distinctive feature that make us a school of choice for many parents. The additional pre-school provision will hopefully ensure that the popularity of the school continues as a wider group of parents can experience the superb early years provision. It will also

enable us to build relationships with families earlier to ensure that we can provide early support for children's needs especially with regard to school readiness.

The additional income will ensure that we can maintain the necessary adult to pupil ratio to continue to provide small classes with substantial additional adult support (e.g., in class teaching assistants, therapeutic support and Wildlife Garden provision). It will also enable us to consider how we might expand the current accommodation to encompass the larger cohorts currently moving through the school due to the increases in Reception intakes.

### **Other Considerations (What risks have we considered in the proposal?)**

Many of the points raised in the responses to the consultation (both written and otherwise) have been part of the ongoing discussions at governing body meetings. Hopefully we have now been able to answer some of those points and over the next few weeks, we will hope to give the same attention to any additional comments.

In order to do this, the governors will be meeting on a fortnightly basis to ensure that any decisions have been thoroughly evaluated and efficiently planned. We are of course fortunate to have a superb range of professional skills on our governing body including project management, architectural design, marketing and finance.

Below there are some thoughts and reflection in response to some of the generic comments that have been raised by parents: -

#### *Flexible provision for mixed age pupils*

Over the last four years, standards at Charlesworth have risen significantly. In fact, our reading results have been in the top 10% nationally. This is because of a commitment from staff and governors to ensure that teaching and learning is firmly focussed on the needs of individual children. In order to do this, we have designed a bespoke tracking and assessment system to monitor progress against age related objectives. All classes currently provide for mixed age children and therefore it is essential that the curriculum covers not only the subjects in the curriculum but also the age and ability ranges within the class. This includes bridging across different key stages e.g., in Miss Barton's class the teaching and learning needs incorporate the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage One. We believe that we are highly effective in meeting the needs of children in mixed age classes and would continue to do so even when classes are organised in a different way.

#### *Meeting the additional needs of pre-school children alongside Year One pupils*

As mentioned above, there are many advantages to operating an Early Years Unit that provide a superb start for children arriving at Charlesworth. We have already held discussions with people who run this type of provision and some of us have experience in previous schools. We intend to invite representatives of the local authority and schools operating a unit to share their experiences with parents at Charlesworth. We have also committed to additional staffing that will allow us to manage additional self-care needs of younger children in a way that will not impact on the older ones. In addition, the Local Authority will be supporting us to ensure that the school facilities match the differing needs of younger children and that these improvements will be in place before Sept 2020.

Ensuring that any additional classroom is fit for purpose

The governors are working alongside the LA to determine what additional accommodation would be suitable to install on the Town Lane site. As we gather further information it will of course be shared as part of ongoing engagement with parents, pupils and staff.

Ensuring that Year Two pupils are supported in their transition to the Town Lane site

The staff have identified this as a critical consideration and are currently discussing extended transition periods and increased opportunities for the younger children to spend time on the Town Lane site as a preparation for transition. Children who might be emotionally vulnerable have always been identified at Charlesworth and structured transition plans put in place. This is a model that has been successful in the past and one that we will build on in the future. As already mentioned, it is proposed that the Y2 cohort in Sept 2020 move to the Town Lane Site along with their teacher and teaching assistant so that the adults have a good knowledge of the children and will be able to support them according to their individual needs.

We are also proposing some changes to playtime and lunchtime arrangements at the Town Lane site which will include the possibility of a split lunchtime to ensure that the younger children do not feel overwhelmed when they first arrive. Again, this is part of an on-going discussion and we will keep people informed of what these arrangements might look like.

Once again, thank you for all the contributions that have been made so far to the conversation around the proposed changes. We will endeavour to maintain an ongoing flow of information to ensure people feel engaged and listened to as we move forward towards what we believe is a bright and exciting future for our school.

Charlesworth Governing Body