

# Notice of Meeting

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## Delegated Officer Decisions

**Thursday,  
24th March, 2016 at 4.14 pm**

Date of despatch of Agenda: 24 March 2016

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Stephen Chard on 01635 519462  
e-mail: [stephen.chard@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:stephen.chard@westberks.gov.uk)

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at  
[www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)



**WestBerkshire**  
C O U N C I L

To: All Councillors

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# Agenda

## Part I

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Andy Day  
Head of Strategic Support

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Moira Fraser on telephone (01635) 519045.



# Agenda Item 1

## Delegated Officer's Decision

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Service Grouping</b>
	Education
<b>Subject:</b>	Proposal from Welford and Wickham CE Primary school to change its' status from a Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided school
<b>Decision taken:</b>	The proposal is approved.
<b>Reason for decision taken:</b>	The proposal to change the status has been considered in line with the statutory School Organisation guidance. The school has consulted with its' community. The Head of Service is satisfied that due process has been followed and that the proposal has educational merits. The proposal confirms that the Governing Body are able and willing to meet their financial responsibilities for building work, and demonstrates that it is financially able to provide the required capital funding.
<b>Other options considered:</b>	The status could remain Voluntary Controlled.
<b>Decision taken by:</b>	Ian Pearson
<b>Scheme of Delegation Ref:</b>	3.16.14
<b>Job Title:</b>	Head of Education
<b>Those consulted:</b>	Leigh Hogan (Legal)
<b>Background papers:</b>	The school's formal application to change status The school's consultation document

I confirm that I have fully advised and have taken account of all the relevant facts in making this decision.

<b>Date Decision Made</b>	<b>Date Decision will be Implemented</b> (5 clear days)

<b>Officer:</b>	
<b>Witnessed by:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	24/03/2016

This decision is eligible to be 'called-in'. However, if the decision has not been 'called-in' by 5.00pm on , then it will be implemented.

*If you have any queries regarding this decision, please contact:*

**Name:** Caroline Corcoran

**Job Title:** Service Manager (Access, Planning and Trading)

**Tel:** 1635519030

**Email:** Caroline.corcoran@westberks.gov.uk



## Appendix A: School's Proposal

### Publication of Statutory Proposal:

#### Section 1:

##### School address, DfE number and LA details

Welford and Wickham CE Primary School, Wickham, Newbury, Berkshire RG20 8HL  
URN 109984

LA: West Berkshire Council, West Street House, West Street, Newbury RG14 1BZ

#### School Context:

Welford and Wickham CE Primary School (VC) is a small rural primary school in the west of West Berkshire. The school currently provides education for 96 children and was judged by Ofsted as 'Outstanding' in 2009. Following the resignation of the head at the neighbouring school, Stockcross CE Primary School (VA) in 2011, the then Headteacher was asked by the Stockcross Governing Board to become Executive Head over both schools. This arrangement was successful for both schools, raising standards at Stockcross and supporting a range of cross school collaboration. The schools appointed the new Executive Headteacher jointly in September 2015 as a clear signal to cement the strong links between the schools to ensure that both schools continue to thrive in the future.

#### Section 2:

##### Details about any pre-publication consultation - e.g, staff, Diocese which has taken place, including the responses from those consulted

A number of meetings with Robin Sharples and Gordon Joyner at Oxford Diocese to fully understand the implications of becoming VA. Following these meetings, the Governors were able to make an informed decision to recommend a change to the school's status. A joint FGB meeting was held at Stockcross School to discuss the impact this would have for the future of both schools.

In preparation for this proposal, the Governing Board at WW held open meetings on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2015 and again on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2015 with staff and parents to allow a frank and honest discussion to take place, concerning the possible impact of this proposed change. There was some initial concern from parents that the change from VC to VA would mean an overemphasis on the approach to religion in school. These concerns were allayed. Otherwise there was broad support for this proposal. There were no concerns expressed by staff around the potential change from being employed by the LA to being employed by the WW FGB.

**Section 3:**

**Detail of the prescribed alteration and evidence of demand for proposal**  
**Please include whether the school wishes to acquire, change or lose a religious character**

Welford and Wickham CE Primary School respectfully request a change from Voluntary Controlled to Voluntary Aided Status and cite the following as evidence of demand for the proposal:

Governors from both schools believe that changing WW from VC to VA status would lay the foundation to further strengthen collaboration between the two schools, supporting both schools to thrive in the future in a complimentary partnership.

There has been no demand for this change from the community. However the Governing Board feel that the proposal is a valid response to the uncertain and continuously changing educational landscape; in essence, this is about future proofing the school and maximising the school's ability to fulfil its potential in the future. The Governing Board has agreed that this proactive step is in the best interests of the children, school and the community.

The schools already have joint policies and standards committees where governors from both schools collaborate to deliver a common approach to a range of statutory and non-statutory requirements and decisions.

We believe that there will be no change to the religious character of the school.

**Section 4:**

**Rationale for change and objectives (including how the proposal will increase educational standards and parental choice)**

The key rationale for this change is to demonstrate a clear commitment and a proactive approach to future school leadership at WW in an uncertain and ever-changing educational landscape. The Governing Board has decided through rigorous and lengthy research and discussion, that in order to fulfil government policy to build collaborative partnerships and alliances with other schools, this change is vital to support its next steps in securing WW's future, both strategically and financially.

Government policy, especially in small rural schools, is to build collaborative partnerships and alliances with other educational establishments. The proposed change supports that policy.

It is clear from the recent spending review that the Government are prioritising child care for pre-school children and investing in new schools rather than supporting small rural schools.

We believe that the proposal is vital to secure the school's robustness both strategically and financially. In real terms, we will see our annual budget reduce and this must be planned for.

By simplifying administration across the two schools, the proposal will release more time and funding for core activities.

An improved framework and greater collaboration between the two schools will support the transition of the children in both schools as they move to secondary school.

Currently 6 staff (21%) have two contracts (one from the LA as the employer for Welford and Wickham School and one from Stockcross Governing Board). If both schools had Voluntary Aided status, then staff could have one contract and work flexibly across both schools, using their skills and expertise to the greatest benefit for the children. The current position just accentuates the differences between the two schools rather than minimising them.

Parents and children would benefit from the advantages offered by a small friendly rural school as well as some of those provided by association with a larger school.

#### **Section 5:**

**How you have considered any effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions within the area, and including any mitigation actions that you propose?**

Stockcross School Governing Board were in agreement that there were many advantages to us being able to collaborate on more things, and in time create an 'Executive' Governing Board to oversee both schools, with individual Governing Bodies for each school reporting into the main Governing Board. Governors are aware of the increased responsibility they will bear and voted unanimously to make the change to VA status. There did not seem to be any negative considerations on the impact of the change locally as the change is more of an administrative change and will not affect the curriculum or the character of the school. It is already a Church of England school, delivering the RE curriculum recommended by West Berkshire Council and this will continue.

The change will further develop the links already in place with Stockcross School and allow these to be based in a formalised and simple structure. Future collaboration can be built on that platform and become the norm for both schools. Both schools are Church of England schools and so the ethos of Welford and Wickham School would not change.

In a 5 mile radius there are other schools, both Church of England and non-faith. We do not believe there will be any negative impact.

#### **Updated response - 18/3/2016:**

We consulted Stockcross School who were positive about the proposed change. No other conversations took place with other schools, although this has been widely publicised in the area with ample opportunity for feedback. There has been none.

**Section 6:**

**Project costs and an indication of how these will be met, including how long-term Value for Money will be achieved.**

This change has no associated costs, and we will be in a position to demonstrate to the Diocese that we have made provision in next year's budget to meet our financial obligations.

A more robust framework for collaboration will financially future proof the school and allow both schools to take advantage of economies of scale.

**Section 7:**

**How has the school complied with the statutory consultation process? Include consultation with parents, staff, Diocese and any other interested parties. Please attach a copy of the proposal which should include dates for comments/ objections and confirm this has been published on the school's website, in a local newspaper and at / next to the main entrance to the school.**

There was a full consultation period running from 6<sup>th</sup> January 2016 to 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2016. A letter was sent to staff and parents in December advising of the upcoming consultation so parents had plenty of notice of the meetings in January. A staff meeting in December, attended by the Chairman of Governors, gave the staff an opportunity to ask any questions about the proposal. This was followed by 2 meetings on 5<sup>th</sup> January for parents. The proposal together with a response form were available and were posted on the school website. A copy was at the entrance to the school. A notice was placed in the Newbury Weekly News on 7<sup>th</sup> January. The Parish Council was also informed and the notice was published in the Parish Magazine. Parents and Governors at Stockcross School were also informed of the consultation and were able to respond if they wished to do so. There have been 4 responses and one email request for clarification from the Executive Head on the RE curriculum. This was provided. Of the responses, one was sent from two parents who had both separately disagreed with the original proposal last year. Their comments on this occasion clearly support this proposal, as did the other three responses. One parent attended the evening meeting that was held on 7<sup>th</sup> January. We talked about the process and what it involved and the parent was happy and felt well informed on the proposal. A response from that parent is included in those mentioned above. Verbal feedback from parents has been positive. As many parents indicated that they had sent feedback before, I am detailing the responses from the earlier consultation below. (Referred to as pre-consultation for the purposes of this proposal).

During the pre-consultation a discussion took place on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2015 which 4 parents attended. Another discussion on 19<sup>th</sup> May saw 15 attendees. The response forms from these discussions were as follows; 22 were positive and supportive. Of these 10 were from teachers or members of the community and 12 were from parents. There was 1 neutral response which made some points but did not state for or against. There were 8 negative responses, mainly from parents who could not see the justification for change or had concerns about the religious ethos of the school post change.

All those people that expressed a negative response in the earlier pre-consultation have had a chance to respond to the most recent consultation and only two have done so.



Even if an assumption is made that those people have not changed their minds, the comments made by many in the pre-consultation show a lack of understanding of the impact of this proposal on the religious character and ethos of the school. Governors were able to answer some of the concerns raised last year in this proposal and better inform parents of the process. Governors believe that anyone disagreeing with this proposal has had many opportunities to have their views heard. No negative feedback has been received during or since the end of this Statutory Consultation period.

A FGB meeting was held at Welford and Wickham at 9.15am on 12<sup>th</sup> February to discuss the results of the Consultation and to decide whether any mitigation was required as a result of the feedback. Minutes of the meeting have been recorded and following discussion an unanimous decision was taken to proceed with the Proposal.

#### **Section 8:**

**Implementation Plan and any proposed stages for implementation (nb: Please include the following:- Proposals in relation to staff and their current contracts of employment and TUPE implications and the Re-constitution of the Governing Board following implementation and new Instrument of Government)**

It is important to the Governors that the transfer of contracts of employment is carried out with care and with due consideration. It is therefore proposed that following a decision from the Local Authority on the school's status in April, there should be a period of adjustment to allow the re-constitution of the Governing Board. Staff contracts should then be changed over under guidance from the Diocese.

#### **Updated response - 18/3/2016:**

Date	Action
12 <sup>th</sup> April	LA Informs school of decision
19 <sup>th</sup> April	School informs parents, staff and local community
26 <sup>th</sup> April	Reconstitute Governing Board with reference to Stockcross Constitution and issue as Draft
May (special meeting date to be agreed)	Governors meeting to agree new Constitution
June (by end of June)	Issue new contracts to staff
July (by the end of term)	New contracts and constitution in place.

**Section 9:**

The Governing Board must be able and willing to meet their financial responsibilities for building work. Please demonstrate that the Governing Board has access to sufficient funds to enable it to meet 10% of its capital expenditure for at least 5 years from the date of implementation, taking into account anticipated building projects.

Not Applicable.

**Updated response - 18/3/2016:**

1. The following sums are available under relevant budgets:

- £1,000 C0010 (unplanned maintenance)
- £1,000 C0018 (planned preventative maintenance)
- £1,000 C0242 (minor works)
- Capital fund designated for securing school boundaries to enhance Safeguarding

We therefore can confirm that we have access to sufficient funds to meet the requirements for 10% of capital expenditure. We are not anticipating any costs from this specific project.

**Section 10:**

Consideration of any transfer of Land issues, including land ownership, transfer of the site, and the playing field to the North West of the school (which is leased by the Council).

No change.

**Updated response - 18/3/2016:**

Land on which the school sits is held in Trust. This will remain the case with the new status and therefore no transfer is required. As far as the playing field is concerned, the Lease for this is attached. The landowner leases it to the LA and the school picks up the cost for this. This is part of the ongoing budget accounted for in E18. We plan for this arrangement to continue with the new status.