

Crowle Age Range Change

Crowle CE First School is a smaller than average church school, where pupils are taught in mixed aged classes; Reception, Year 1/2 and Year 3/4.

Crowle CE First School joined the Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust (DoWMAT) in March 2017 and now benefits from a dynamic collaborative network of 15 academies and the extensive school improvement support offered by the Trust.

The vast majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and all children speak English as their first language. The proportion of children known to be eligible for free school meals is below average and those children who have special educational needs is in line with the national average. There are currently no pupils with an EHCP.

The school is located in a rural location; a village on the outskirts of Worcester. The current school population is made up of children from within catchment and the surrounding villages, Worcester, Droitwich and Pershore. Pupils move on to a variety of settings in both the state and private sector.

Crowle CE First School was rated as Good by Ofsted in October 2019. The report states that;

“The headteacher and other staff have ambitious aims for all pupils to achieve their very best.”

“Pupils love school. The family atmosphere here means that staff know all the pupils very well. The school’s vision is that pupils are supported to become caring, confident and committed to learning. This underpins everything staff do. As a result, pupils thrive and achieve well.”

“Teachers have high expectations of pupils. Behaviour across the school is very good. Pupils have a sense of responsibility, not only for their own behaviour, but for the behaviour in their class and the whole school as well. Bullying is very rare. If it did happen, pupils know that adults would sort it out quickly.”

“Pupils build confidence and resilience from the day they start school. They know that they can learn from their mistakes. Pupils are encouraged to set goals and keep trying until they achieve them. Visits from inspiring speakers, such as Paralympic athletes, help to strengthen this message.”

The Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust and the Local Academy Board of Crowle CE First School are proposing to change the age range from the present first school age range of 4-9 years to a primary age range of 4-11 years.

The PAN of 15 children per year group will be maintained.

The proposal will;

- give parents and carers the choice to continue their child’s primary education in one setting, without the need to change school for the start of Year 5. This will provide continuity of education throughout the primary years leading up to the SATs in Year 6. Approaches to teaching and learning would be consistent across the full age range.
- improve the educational outcomes for all pupils as school staff will know and understand the needs of each individual child for an extra 2 years
- provide more opportunity for siblings to attend the same school
- provide closer contact for parents/carers with school staff over a longer period of time. A more continuous relationship between the school, parents, carers and outside agencies can ensure that all pupils, but particularly those with special educational needs, are supported effectively through to the end of Year 6

- help sustain the long term viability of Crowle CE First School by making the school an attractive option to a wider group of parents
- align the school with other local schools within the area following the recent age range change within the Avonreach Multi Academy Trust (Cherry Orchard Primary, Norton CE Primary and Inkberrow Primary), the recent change of age to Flyford Flavell First School which became a primary school from September 2020 and the change to a primary school for Himbleton CE First School from September 2021
- Enable the school to grow its staff team which will result in a broader skill set and greater capacity to for sustained school improvement

The Local Academy Board and staff at Crowle CE First School believes the school can offer a high quality educational experience for children from their Reception year right through to Year 6, the end of the primary phase. The transition to High School will then coincide with the end of Key Stage 2 and the children will be well placed to start their Key Stage 3 journey from Year 7 in one setting.

Data shows that end of Key Stage Two outcomes in Worcestershire are below that of neighbouring counties where the system is predominantly two-tier. Please see table below:

| | % of pupils attaining national expectation or above at the end of Key Stage Two in RWM Combined: | |
|----------------|--|------|
| Locality: | 2018 | 2019 |
| Worcestershire | 61% | 63% |
| Warwickshire | 67% | 66% |
| National | 65% | 65% |

In recent years, the number of pupils attending from out of catchment has been consistently significant. See below:

| Intake to Year R | % of pupils from out of catchment |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2018 | 20% |
| 2019 | 22% |
| 2020 | 33% |

A significant number of our pupils attend from Worcester which offers a two tier school system. As a result, the school often loses children before the end of Year 4 as parents seek to ensure their child is within the two tier system with access to one of the High Schools in Worcester. By taking children all the way through the primary age range to the end of Year 6, we will align ourselves to this system and thus provide our pupils with a smoother transition to the next phase of their education, should parents opt to look to Worcester for their Key Stage 3 provision.

The school also finds parents often opt to move to the private sector at the start of Key Stage 2 or even at the end of Year 4, specifically to avoid a three tier middle school system. Informal feedback from these parents has suggested that should Crowle be able to extend its educational provision to include Years 5 and 6, these parents would be happy for their children to remain at Crowle for the whole of the primary phase. The age range change would therefore provide parents with a further viable option in terms of educational provision for their child.

The Local Academy Board has received informal feedback from certain parents that indicates some opt to look out of catchment for their educational setting, specifically to ensure continuous education throughout the primary phase in one school without necessitating a move at the end of Year 4.

When would we propose to convert to a primary school?

Ideally, we would like to take our first Year 5 cohort from September 2021. Our first Year 6 cohort would then follow on from September 2022.

What changes will be needed to staffing, leadership, accommodation and Governance to support the change of age?

Ultimately, the school plans to utilise the current Reception outdoor classroom area and convert this space into the designated classroom for our Year 5 and 6 children. From 2021, a teacher will be employed to teach both Year groups in a mixed Year 5/6 class.

The existing leadership structure of one Headteacher will be retained. Class teachers will lead on specific subject areas and key aspects of provision.

As an academy with the Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust (DoWMAT), the 'governing body' of Crowle CE First School is the DoWMAT Board of Directors.

The Trust Board ensures each academy within the MAT receives a high level of educational support and challenge. Crowle will be fully supported throughout this change to ensure the quality of educational provision remains high and fully meets the needs of each individual child.

DoWMAT remains committed to the principle of local governance by local people; recognising and valuing the effort taken by members of the Local Academy Boards (LABs) who support our academies in three key areas;

1. Guardian of the Vision and Values: Our DoWMAT Local Academy Boards have an important role to play in upholding the Christian distinctiveness of their academy by ensuring our Christian vision and values underpins all aspects of academy life. In this way, we can be assured that our pupils grow and learn in schools where their individual qualities are nurtured to instil fulfilment, self-worth, the skills to contribute to society and confidence in the future.
2. Supporting the drive for school improvement: Our DoWMAT Local Academy Boards play a crucial role in enabling our academies to deliver on their moral purpose; delivering the very best in educational provision for their pupils. By creating safe and stimulating environments, full of engaging learning opportunities, our academy teams will empower all pupils to develop a love of learning and achieve of their best.
3. A critical friend for financial decisions: Our DoWMAT Local Academy Boards hold a wealth of knowledge on good financial practice and the importance of making sound, cost effective operational decisions. Our Headteachers value the input and oversight these members are able to offer as they navigate through a challenging financial landscape in the pursuit of high quality, sustainable provision.

The Local Academy Board at Crowle CE First School makes an excellent contribution to the school in ensuring each Crowle pupil attends a successful academy which is providing a good education whilst supporting their holistic well-being. This will continue should the age range be extended.

The DoWMAT Board will fund the building of the new classroom space.

What provision has been made for the onward journey of our Year 6 children into Year 7?

Informal conversations have taken place with Pershore High School who are prepared to consult on their admission pupil admission number in order to take children leaving Crowle CE First School at the end of Year 6 into their Year 7 cohort from September 2023. It is important to note that, at this stage, the outcome of this consultation is not guaranteed so parents need to be aware of this risk.

Parents would have the option to seek a Year 7 place at an alternative school when they reach the end of Key Stage 2 at Crowle CE Primary School.

The option for parents to send their child to St. Nicholas CE Middle School would still be available. St. Nicholas CE Middle School is also an academy within the Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust and remains committed to the provision of Year 7 places for children within the Pershore Pyramid for parents for whom this is a preferred option.

What impact would the age range change have for other schools in the area?

The main impact of the change will be for St. Nicholas CE Middle School for whom Crowle CE First is a feeder school. St. Nicholas, also part of the Diocese of Worcester Multi Academy Trust is well prepared for a drop in numbers having been alerted to the change of age plans for several small first schools within the pyramid. Plans for reducing staff numbers through natural wastage are being considered as well as through a graduated staffing restructure over several years. Staff vacancies at other DoWMAT schools are shared as a means of ensuring continuity of employment for any middle school staff at risk of redundancy.

Schools in the Pershore Pyramid have close links and Crowle fully intends to continue working collaboratively as part of the cluster to share best practice and secure strong provision for pupils across the cluster.

How will high curriculum provision be maintained?

All teachers at Crowle CE First School are qualified to teach across the whole primary age range and have previous experience of working in schools offering full primary provision.

The Crowle staff have a range of expertise which covers the full primary curriculum. In addition, the school works closely within the DoWMAT to share best practice and ensure teaching provision and the quality of education is up to date and of high quality.