

## **Impact and equalities assessment – Proposed new primary school at Whitehouse South in the Western Expansion Area of Milton Keynes**

As prescribed by section 9 of the Academies Act 2010 and section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the local authority must assess the potential impact of any new school on existing educational provision in the area. The local authority must also consider whether the new school would impact on any groups with protected characteristics.

This Impact and Equalities Assessment has been created as a result of the proposal to build a new 630 place primary school (academy) in the Western Expansion Area of Milton Keynes due to open in September 2028. This school is being established because of significant demand for primary school places due to the housing developments in the area.

### **Conclusions of the Impact and Equalities Assessment**

#### **Impact on the population of Milton Keynes**

The Impact and Equalities Assessment (IEA) concludes that the proposals will not adversely affect people living in Milton Keynes.

In assessing the impacts of the proposal on people with protected characteristics the IEA found that they had a positive effect on all protected characteristics other than pregnancy and maternity where no adverse impact was found.

While the IEA found a positive impact on religion or belief, it notes that the Regional Schools Commissioner may decide that this school should be sponsored by an academy trust with a particular religious focus which could impact on school admissions and whether or not to admit a child on the basis of religion or belief. However, the LA would be seeking assurances throughout the application and assessment process of the competition on how the trust would cater for all religions as it is envisaged that the school would be inclusive of all faiths in order to serve and cater for the new local diverse community that the school will be located in,

The LA are seeking a sponsor that will provide excellent support facilities to meet the needs of all children. They will provide support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, Looked After Children, those with pupil premium funding and any other disadvantaged groups. The sponsor must have a drive for excellent outcomes in attendance, attainment and achievement for all children and a clear commitment to closing the gaps between pupil groups.

#### **Impact on neighbouring schools**

Population data and projections show that significant additional capacity is required within the Western Expansion Area of Milton Keynes over the next five years and beyond which has resulted in a decision to propose the new school provision.

The projections taking account of historic and current pupil numbers, underlying demographics and the expected pupil yield from new housing show that a shortfall in places in the area can be expected from September 2028 onwards. This shortfall of places would continue to rise, largely due to the impacts of new housing, from 2028 onwards without the introduction of additional provision. The proposal would have no adverse impact on schools already existing within the Western Expansion Area as the school will grow slowly in line with additional demand from housing development and in partnership with neighbouring schools to eliminate any adverse impact on the three schools already existing within the local area.

Upon review there are no negative impacts that will arise from a new school being commissioned in the area to meet demand. Therefore, the new school option has been chosen to ensure the LA continues to meet its statutory duty for school place sufficiency and to help ensure that children are provided with access to high quality local education provision for all catchment children in the future.

The completed Impact and Equalities Assessment is attached as an appendix to this school specification.

## **Impact and Equalities assessment (IEA): Proposal to open a new primary school at Whitehouse South in the Western Expansion Area**

### **Section 1. What this IEA about?**

A proposal to establish a new mainstream primary school to primarily serve the Whitehouse South development in the Western Expansion Area of Milton Keynes. It is intended that the new school will be a free school (a state-funded school, operating as an academy, independent of the local authority) in accordance with Department for Education guidance. A period of consultation with the community has already been carried out and further statutory consultations will be carried out post school award.

### **Section 2. Why is this being proposed?**

The council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places in the area. There are currently three primary schools in the Western Expansion Area that are becoming increasingly full as primary pupil numbers are now rising alongside housing growth. Over the coming years these existing schools will reach their operational capacity. With significant continued housing development in the area over the next ten years, additional provision is required to meet growing demand in the area.

We also have a statutory duty in respect of early years and SEND provision both of which will be supported by the delivery of this proposal.

**Section 3. What will change?**

It is proposed that a new primary school in the Whitehouse South area of the Western Expansion Area will be established with effect from September 2028. The age range of the school will be 2 to 11 years (Reception to Year 6), eventually providing places for 630 pupils (three forms of entry) including nursery provision for 2 to 4 year old and a 24 place SEND unit for pupils with a Communication and Interaction designation. The school will provide places for boys and girls (mixed). If the proposal is approved, the academy trust chosen to operate the school would determine the oversubscription criteria for admission purposes. To help with a swift opening, for at least the first two years of operation, the admission arrangements for the school must be in line with the admission arrangements for maintained schools in Milton Keynes.

The proposed new school will provide additional school place capacity that will primarily serve the Whitehouse development in the Western Expansion Area of Milton Keynes. It is proposed that the new school should have a defined catchment area based on the boundaries of the new development sites. This would mean that for admission purposes, residents of the new development would have priority for places in the event of oversubscription. This enables the new school to best serve its immediate local area/community.

#### Section 4. Consultation?

A preliminary consultation was held on specific aspects of the proposal including type of school, age range, opening profile etc. to support with the creation of the new school specification. This six week consultation ran from 17 March 2025 to 27 April 2025 with consultation documents being distributed to a wide range of stakeholders. In total, seven responses to the consultation were received. No objections were raised about the need for additional provision in the area. One respondent felt that there was need in the area for more SEND provision than is being proposed. However, current SEND projections do not indicate there is need for additional provision to meet local demand above what is being proposed. SEND provision is considered as part of the council's SEND place planning strategy and monitored via the established Specialist Provision Place Planning Group. The group will continue to monitor the position as the development continues to grow. One respondent expressed concern that another primary school would impact further on traffic congestion in the area. This matter is already being addressed by the Highways department. A summary of responses is included at Annex A. A further consultation will be conducted - the formal statutory consultation, which sponsors are required to undertake under section 10 of the Academies Act 2010, takes place during the preopening phase of the school i.e. after the sponsor has been selected.

#### Section 5- Equalities Impact Assessment

| Protected Characteristic<br>(as defined in the Equality Act) | Impact   |          |            | Comments  |
|--|----------|----------|------------|---|
|  | Positive | Negative | No adverse |   |
| Age  | X        |          |            | The school will provide nursery and school places for the relevant aged children required. No negative age related impact.  |
| Disability   | X        |          |            | The school will be designed to the highest standard for accessibility. This would represent a further improvement on existing provision. It will also include a 24 place SEND unit specifically for pupils with a Communication and Interaction designation. The school will also be expected to accommodate a broad range of needs within the mainstream setting of children with an EHCP. |
| Gender or Gender Reassignment                                | X        |          |            | The school will be for both male and female pupils and have a positive impact on this characteristic.   |
| Pregnancy and Maternity                                      |          |          | X          | This proposal will have not have an impact on this characteristic.  |

|                    |   |  |  |  |
|--------------------|---|--|--|--|
| Race               | X |  |  | The school will not discriminate against race and therefore will have a positive impact on this characteristic.  |
| Religion/Belief    | X |  |  | <p>The school is not being proposed as a religious school and therefore has a positive impact on this characteristic as it will cater for children of all religions and be inclusive of all faiths.</p> <p>The Regional Schools Commissioner may decide that this school should be sponsored by an academy trust with a particular religious focus which could have the potential to impact on school admissions and whether to admit a child based on religion or belief. However, we would be seeking assurances throughout the application and assessment process of the competition on how the trust would cater for all religions as the school must be inclusive of all faiths in order to serve and cater for the new local diverse community that the school will be located in.</p> |
| Sex                | X |  |  | The school will be for both male and female pupils and have a positive impact on this characteristic.  |
| Sexual Orientation | X |  |  | This proposal will have a positive impact on this characteristic.  |
| Any other groups   | X |  |  | All other groups will not face barriers in accessing this school to receive high quality education.  |

### Section 6 Addressing any impact

|  |   |
|--|---|
| A. No major change needed  | X |
| B. Continue with the project despite having identified some potential for adverse impact or missed opportunities |   |
| C. Adjust or amend the project   |   |
| D. Stop the project  |   |

### Section 7- Summary

The pupil projections taking account of historic and current pupil numbers, underlying demographics and the expected pupil yield from new housing, show that a shortfall in places can be expected from September 2028 onwards. This shortfall of places would continue to rise, largely due to the impacts of new housing, and without the introduction of additional provision the council would be unable to meet its statutory duty of providing sufficient school places. Upon review there are no negative impacts that will arise from a new school being commissioned in the area to meet demand. Therefore, the new school option has been chosen to ensure the LA continues to meet its statutory duty for school place sufficiency and to help ensure that children are provided with access to high quality local education provision.

### Section 8- Sign off section

This EIA was completed by:

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