Proposed change of age ranges at All Saints Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School, Dulverton, and Dulverton Middle and Community School.

Proposed changes to free school transport entitlement to schools across The Exmoor Federation area

Schools and proposer details:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Proposer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Saints Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School, Fishers Mead, Dulverton, TA22 9EE</td>
<td>The Governing Body, The Exmoor Federation, Barns Close West, Dulverton, TA22 9EE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dulverton Middle and Community School, Barns Close West, Fullerton, TA22 9EE</td>
<td>Somerset County Council, County Hall, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4DY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes to free school transport to schools across The Exmoor Federation.</td>
<td>Somerset County Council, County Hall, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4DY</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This document is the supporting evidence for the informal consultation in November to December 2015

If you need this document in another format (language, large print, easy read) please call the Schools Commissioning Team: on 01823 355828.
Proposed change of age ranges at All Saints Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School, Dulverton and Dulverton Middle and Community School.

Proposed changes to free school transport entitlement to schools across The Exmoor Federation area

1 Summary:

To protect both schools, ensuring a high quality of education and facilitating community access we are consulting on reducing the age range of the two schools in Dulverton thereby creating an Infant's and Junior school instead of the current First and Middle Schools, and increasing access to free school transport.

The proposed changes are:

- All Saints First School (3 to 9) reduces its age range and becomes an Infant school – with Nursery provision – catering for children from 3 to 7 years of age which covers Foundation and Key Stage 1.
- Dulverton Middle School (9 to 13) reduces its age range and becomes a Junior School catering for children from 8 to 11 years of age which covers Key Stage 2.
- Transport is offered to Minehead Middle School for pupils within the new Dulverton Junior School Catchment area from year 7 for a transitional period.
- Transport is offered to Minehead Middle School for pupils within the Exford First School Catchment area from year 5.
- Transport is continued to the new Dulverton Junior School for pupils within the Exford First School area from year 5 to year 6.
- Transport to West Somerset College is phased out for pupils within the new Dulverton Junior School area.

In this proposal, the age range of Exford Church of England First School will not be affected.

The changes in age range for All Saints Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School are being proposed by the Governors of The Exmoor Federation because this is a church school and they are required to do this by law.

The changes in age range for Dulverton Middle and Community School are being proposed by Somerset County Council because this is a community school, and the local authority must oversee change when the upper and lower age range at a school are proposed to change.

These proposals are linked.

Changes to free school transport are being proposed by Somerset County Council because they are the responsible authority.

It is proposed that these changes will take effect from September 2016.
2 Introduction

2.1 The local authority must ensure there are a sufficient number of places at good or outstanding schools, and the local authority must be a champion for the best interests of pupils, listening to and acting upon the interests and concerns of parents. It also monitors the performance of maintained schools and ensures that where improvements are necessary, these are carried out effectively. Schools need to have sufficient pupils to pay for the curriculum which it is required to provide within the National Curriculum Key Stages.

2.2 The First and Middle schools in Dulverton area are part of a three-tier education system of First, Middle or Upper schools in the West Somerset area. First schools cater for children from 4 to 9 of age, Middle schools cater for children from 9 to 13 years of age, and the upper school, West Somerset College, caters for children with an age range of 13 to 16, and it also has a sixth form. Some First Schools also have a nursery, which is the case at both All Saints and Exford First Schools.

2.3 Most schools in the country are part of a two-tier system with Primary Schools for 4 to 11 year olds that teach Key Stages 1 and 2; and a Secondary school for 11 to 16 year olds that teach Key Stages 3 and 4. In some cases in the two-tier system the primary phase is organised into an Infant’s School (Key Stage 1) and a Junior School (Key Stage 2), - this is being proposed for Dulverton.

How the three tier system compares to the two tier system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
<th>12</th>
<th>13</th>
<th>14</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>16+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12/13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Curriculum</td>
<td>Foundation Stage</td>
<td>Key Stage 1</td>
<td>Key Stage 2</td>
<td>Key Stage 3</td>
<td>Key Stage 4</td>
<td>Key Stage 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Three Tier</td>
<td>First Schools</td>
<td>Middle Schools</td>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Two Tier</td>
<td>Primary Schools (including Infant’s and Junior arrangement)</td>
<td>Secondary Schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

2.4 The table above shows the difference between the two and three tier system, and how it corresponds with the National Curriculum Key Stages.

2.5 A two tier system of all-through primary, or a mix of Infant’s and Junior Schools, allows pupils to transfer schools at the end of the Key Stages, in line with the National Curriculum framework, against which children’s progress is measured, and on which teachers’ professional development opportunities are based.
3 Background.

3.1 The future of schools in The Exmoor Federation has been the subject of much debate since the governing body of Exmoor Federation asked the local authority for advice in 2013. This has caused anxiety and concern for parents and carers and their children; confusion and division within the school community, and the schools’ partners; and it has unsettled staff, affecting morale, and new recruitment. The new governing body is keen to ensure that stability and security for the future is established. It is committed to ensuring that the three schools under its governance are well-supported, have a sound financial future and, most importantly, are well-placed to ensure the very best educational outcomes for their pupils from September 2016.

3.2 There has been significant discussions and research into possible options to ensure the schools remained financially secure and able to offer a good education for pupils. In the spring of 2014 the governing body of The Exmoor Federation agreed that the local authority should consult about changing the age ranges of both the First and Middle schools so that they become Infant’s and Junior schools. During the informal consultation period there was understandable concern and opposition to the proposals, although many were in favour, with responses from parents marginally in favour of the changes. It was recognised that many families within the area lived closer to a secondary school than they did to the Upper School in Minehead. Having reviewed the responses to the consultation, the governing body decided not to support a change to the age ranges of the two schools.

3.3 In the autumn of 2013 Kingsmead School at Wiveliscombe consulted on extending its catchment area to include The Exmoor Federation Catchment so that year 6 pupils in the area would have priority in the case of Kingsmead being oversubscribed for year 7 entry. This arrangement was implemented for the 2015/16 academic year, allowing parents to apply for places with some degree of certainty of their child being admitted. In the autumn of 2014, Somerset County Council consulted on, and approved, changing the arrangements for school transport from the Dulverton area. Recognising that Wiveliscombe is closer than Minehead to the Dulverton Schools Catchment area the Council approved the provision of dual transport arrangements for pupils from age year 7 (age 11), to Kingsmead School. This was not extended to the families who lived within the Exford catchment as Minehead is the nearest secondary provision for most living in that area.

3.4 From September 2015 it became clear that Kingsmead was the preferred offer for many families. This meant that the future of Dulverton Middle School providing Key Stage 3 would be educationally and financially unviable (years 7 and 8) from the 2015/16 academic year onwards.

3.5 The local authority and governors are determined that all three schools should remain and be structured in such a way that they are good and successful.

3.6 Alternative arrangements such as federating with other schools and joining an Academy chain have been considered, but it was felt this would not address the primary concern of reducing pupil numbers and financial security.
4 Reasons for proposing the move from three-tier to two-tier provision.

4.1

- The Governors of The Exmoor Federation are looking to ensure stability and security for all three schools which they are responsible for following the fall in pupil numbers across the area.

- The changes are being proposed because there are not enough pupils in years 7 and 8 (pupils aged 11 and 12) at Dulverton Middle School to maintain a broad education to meet the needs of the Keys Stage 3 curriculum. This is a result of a steady decline in the number of children living in the area, and some parents preferring to see their children attend a secondary school at age 11. The situation in October 2015 is that there are just 6 pupils in year 7 and 11 in year 8.

- The fall in pupil numbers in recent years has added additional strain on the sustainability of class sizes at the two Dulverton schools - it is important to understand the wider context of the number of children living in the local area when considering the future of the two schools.

- In 2012 the average size of the 0 to 3 year old cohorts was 21, with two cohorts close to 30, giving the opportunity for single age groups passing through the two schools. By 2014 the average 0 to 3 year old cohort had fallen to 17, with just one cohort above 20.

- Based upon these numbers, it is unlikely that the current First and Middle schools will be able to sustain class groups that have single age groups, and may need to have mixed age groups like many other schools in rural Somerset. With little or no house building in the area it is unlikely that there will be much inward migration of families with children to the area.

- Dulverton Middle and Community School has been amongst the smallest providers of secondary education in England for many years and is out of line with most of Somerset and the UK in that age ranges do not align with National Curriculum Key Stages. It is very unusual for secondary schools to have just one class group per year, and this has led to challenges in delivering the level of education needed at this stage in children’s education.

- Class sizes have fallen, particularly for years 7 and 8; reducing classroom interaction and opportunities for team activities. With the small year groups the dynamics within the classroom will suffer and pupils are unable to access their full educational entitlement. Forecast numbers show there is unlikely to be 30 pupils across both year groups going forward, resulting in insufficient funding to provide single class groups.

- With less than half a class of Key Stage 3 children in each year it is not possible to fund the good quality secondary specialist staff required for the Key Stage 3 curriculum. The school already relies on part-time curriculum specialists, requiring these staff to seek work elsewhere, or to undertake additional duties.
With a reducing budget The Exmoor Federation needs to change the way it works. We believe the best way to maintain all three schools for The Exmoor Federation Area is to change the age ranges of the two schools in Dulverton, enabling them to concentrate their work on providing a high quality Foundation, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 Curriculum.

Parents have the right to express a preference for the school which they would like their child to attend. Through these changes parents can express a preference of choosing a secondary school in the two tier system or remaining within the three tier system. The catchment for Dulverton Middle School is large and some families live closer to other Schools than Minehead. There are three other secondary schools which abut the catchment - Kingsmead School is 10 miles to the east at Wiveliscombe, and in Devon, South Molton Community College is 13 miles from Dulverton (but closer for pupils living to the west), and Tiverton is 13 miles away. For some families this may reduce the travelling time to and from school.

Governors and the local authority have a duty to ensure schools are both financially and educationally sustainable. With low pupil numbers expected in future years in years 7 and 8 the school will not receive sufficient funding to continue with single class groups in the secondary phase of education. The proposers believe that these proposals are the best way to achieve that.

It is a critical duty of the local authority to ensure that pupils attain the highest possible standards, and achieve their best. The governing body and the local authority believe that for children in the areas served by All Saints Church of England Voluntary Controlled First, and Dulverton Middle and Community School this change will give parents a better choice of educational provision.

5 What is the impact upon pupils at the two Dulverton Schools?

5.1 With the First School becoming an Infant’s School it will concentrate on teaching the Foundation and Key Stage 1 Curriculum. It will have three year groups – reception, year 1 and year 2, in addition to its nursery and the governors run early years pre-school.

5.2 With the Middle School becoming a Junior School it will concentrate on teaching the Key Stage 2 curriculum and will have four year groups of year 3, 4, 5, and year 6. It is recognised that some pupils at Exford First School may move to Minehead Middle so cohorts may fall in future years. There is some evidence that families will be attracted to move into the area with the two tier education system, and job opportunities.

5.3 Pupils will transfer to other schools for their Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 Curriculum at age 11.

5.4 Pupils from All Saints First School can transfer to the new Junior School in year 3, and Exford First pupils can transfer in year 5. If parents wish, they can choose to transfer their child to another school, but free school transport will not be available unless that is their nearest school.
5.5 All three school within the federation value their relationships with neighbouring schools which enable staff to facilitate good transitions for the pupils of the Federation to their new schools. It is recognised that there will be more schools to work with, but the staff of the Federation are committed to doing so. One of the special features of the Middle School is the Exmoor Curriculum. Staff of the Federation have worked with Exmoor National Park and hope to develop this curriculum for years 5 and 6 at the Junior School in future years.

6 What are the staffing implications?

6.1 With falling pupil numbers, and reduced finances, it is inevitable that some changes will be needed to staffing levels in 2016. These proposals result in significant changes at Key Stage 3, and therefore the Local Authority has provided funding to help staff retrain and improve their opportunities for future employment.

6.2 Staff have been issued with letters advising them that the redundancy process has commenced. Governors and the local authority will do all they can to avoid compulsory redundancies and ensure staff are either employed at the school or found other employment. Staff can discuss their concerns with the head teacher.

6.3 Once governors have been advised about future pupil numbers for September 2016, and have an indicative budget, they will be able to consider the level of staffing required at both schools. It is hoped that this will be completed in the spring term 2016 and will be shared with staff at the earliest possibility.

6.4 It is expected that the appointments and the redundancy process will be concluded by the end of May 2016.

7 Will there be any changes to the buildings?

7.1 As there will be fewer year groups across the two schools there may be some alterations to accommodation. We do not anticipate that these will be extensive and changes will be discussed with governors and the school leadership team.

7.2 All Saints First School will be able to accommodate the new Infant’s School with nursery and Key Stages 1 and 2 without any alterations.

7.3 Dulverton Middle school will be able to accommodate the Junior School with the minimum of change for its 4 year groups. We will investigate improved wifi connectivity for the school, and site security.

7.4 There will be space at the new Junior School, so it is hoped this can be used by the community.
8 What are the transport implications?

8.1 All pupils are legally entitled to free transport to the school nearest to their home address as long as the walking distance between their home address and their chosen school is over 2 miles for under 8 year olds, and 3 miles for over 8 year olds.

8.2 In addition, Somerset has Designated Transport areas which, in the main, are the same as school catchment areas. All pupils living in The Exmoor Federation area are currently entitled to free school transport to West Somerset College from age 13 as the Federation is in the catchment for the College. This arrangement will cease for those pupil living in the area and that are not admitted to the reception year before September 2017. This will result in some pupils in the Dulverton area having a choice of two-tier education with protected eligibility to free school transport to Minehead Middle School and West Somerset College until 2027, after which it will cease.

8.3 All pupils living in the Dulverton Schools’ catchment area are entitled to free school transport to Kingsmead School from year 7 as Kingsmead is the nearest Somerset secondary school. This was introduced in 2015.

8.4 In a rural location such as Exmoor, it is recognised that most schools are a lengthy journey from pupils’ homes and may limit the choice available to parents when expressing a preference for a school place. In Somerset school transport journeys are restricted to 75 minutes for the time a pupil should spend on school transport for each journey to and from school.

8.5 Pupils in the Exford First School area will continue to receive free school transport to the new Dulverton Junior School from year 5 until the end of year 6.

8.6 Although pupils in the Exford area are entitled to apply for a place at Kingsmead School, the local authority does not extend free school transport arrangements. However, If pupils from the Exford area are successful in gaining a place at Kingsmead School, the local authority will seek to make pay seats available on school transport from designated pick-points in the Dulverton area.

8.7 These are the additional transport arrangements that are being proposed:

- Pupils living in the Dulverton Schools’ area will be entitled to free school transport to Minehead Middle School from year 7, from September 2016, subject to the 75 minute rule, for a transitional period, if they are successful in gaining a place at that school. This will be available to any pupil living in the catchment area, and those also admitted in 2016/17 academic year, but will cease after that cohort finishes year 8 in the 2024/25 academic year.

- Pupils living in the Exford First School area will be entitled to free school transport to Minehead Middle School from year 5 from September 2016, if they are successful in gaining a place at that school.

- Free school transport to West Somerset College will cease for those pupils living in the Dulverton area that are not admitted to the reception year before September
2017. This will result in some pupils in the Dulverton area receiving free school transport until the 2027/26 academic year.

8.8 Parents of pupils who live outside the catchment area already have to make their own arrangements to get their child to school, unless the schools in the federation area are the nearest to the pupil’s home address.

8.9 Parents are able to pay for a seat on free school transport where their choice of school is not the designated or nearest school, as long as a place is available. This arrangement is subject to availability, negotiation with the local authority, and subject to priority for those entitled to free school transport.

9 What will the impact be on other schools in the area?

9.1 Although the changes do not have an immediate effect upon most pupils at Exford First School, they will offer parents a new choice of moving onto either middle and upper school or additionally a secondary school. Parents have the right to express a preference for the school which they would like their child to attend after Exford First School. Through these changes they will be able to express a preference of choosing Minehead Middle School or Danesfield School in Williton (both feeding into the West Somerset College) or to attend Dulverton Junior School feeding into Kingsmead School, or another local secondary school.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Year Group</th>
<th>Next Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Little Berries Nursery</td>
<td>Children will progress to the next year group at Little Berries Nursery or will receive details of how to apply for a place at a First School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reception, Years 1, 2, and 3</td>
<td>Pupils will progress to the next year at Exford First School.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year 4</td>
<td>Parents will have received notification about applying for a place at a Middle School in year 5. They can apply for a place at Dulverton Middle School (although that will become a Junior School in September 2016) which could lead to transferring to a Secondary School at age11. Or They can apply for a place at Minehead Middle or Danesfield Middle at Williton, which will lead to the West Somerset College at age 13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.2 For West Somerset College it is likely that they will see a small reduction in admissions by 15 to 25 pupils a year depending upon parental preference. This does not represent a significant number against an admission number of over 200.

9.3 For Kingsmead School it is likely that they will see an increase in applications by 15 to 20 pupils a year, but the accommodation there has recently been extended to support another form of entry.

9.4 Some Devon Schools may see pupils migrate to or from their area now that age ranges are aligned at primary and secondary level. However, we believe this will be marginal.

**Responding to the consultation**

This information is in support of a Statutory Notice for the change in age range at the two Dulverton Schools. The Governors of The Exmoor Federation and Somerset County Council would like to hear your observation regarding these proposals.

This information also sets out proposed changes to Free School Transport arrangements across The Exmoor Federation area. Somerset County Council would like to hear your views regarding these proposals.

You can write to Somerset County Council:-

Julia Ridge, Strategic Manager - Schools Commissioning Team, C402c (Dulverton Schools Consultation) Somerset County Council, County Hall, Taunton TA1 4DY

Or: Send comments by email to Isharris@somerset.gov.uk

Or: Respond on Somerset County Council’s consultation website at (you may need to copy and paste this address into a web browser):-

http://www.somersetconsults.org.uk/consult.ti/DulvertonSchoolschanges/consultationHome

**The closing date for informal consultation responses is 16 December 2015.**

**What happens at the end of this consultation period?**

Both Somerset County Council and The Exmoor Federation governing body will consider all responses received in the form of a report.

Depending upon the level of response, Somerset County Council will either resolve to publish a statutory notice to implement changes to the age range of Dulverton Middle and Community School, or decide not to proceed.

Somerset County Council will consider the responses to the consultation for changes in free school transport arrangements. If they agree to proceed to publish a public notice for the Middle School changes, they are likely to approve changes to free school transport arrangements, although these may be amended if respondents raise significant issues.
The governing body of The Exmoor Federation will meet to consider responses from the consultation. If they agree to continue with their proposal to change the age range of All Saints Church of England Voluntary Controlled First School, they will pass a resolution to do so, subject to Somerset County Council passing a resolution to change the age range of the Middle School after formal consultation. If they do not agree to change the age range, this will be reported to Somerset County Council who may review any decision they have made.

The governing body and the local authority will communicate their decisions following the assessment of the responses to the consultation.

**Timetable for Change**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Period</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publication of the Brief Notice</td>
<td>8 January 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four week period for responses</td>
<td>8 January to 5 February 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of any comments and written report.</td>
<td>12 February to 4 March 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final consideration by Leader of the Council.</td>
<td>12 February to 4 March 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final decision published – target date.</td>
<td>11 March 2016.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation date.</strong></td>
<td>1 September 2016.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>