

20th June 2025

RE: Consultation on a proposal to extend the age range

Cornerstone Academy Trust has previously considered changing the age range of Marpool Primary School from 3-11 to 2-11 years of age. However, the school now has the opportunity to extend the age range to 0-11 years of age. The former children's centre building, that is adjacent to the school, has been offered by Devon County Council to Cornerstone Academy Trust to enable a dedicated nursery for 0, 1 and 2 year olds to be established. The proposal under consultation is to extend the legal age range of the school from 3-11 to 0-11 years of age from September 2025. However, places for 0-2 year olds may not be available until after the October half term 2025 or January 2026 as the provision of places will be subject to completion of building works and improvements to the children's centre building.

Background

Marpool Primary School currently has a nursery for children aged 3 and 4 years of age who learn and play alongside the Reception Class with some shared facilities. The proposal being consulted upon is to extend this provision to 0-2 year olds who will be based in the building previously used by the Children's Centre. As numbers grow there may need to be flexibility with how the nursery places for 0-4 year olds are organised so that the best use is made of staff and resources.

Benefits of the proposal

In light of the Spring 2023 Budget announcement on increases to early years entitlements for working parents and associated funding, Devon County Council is projecting an increase in the demand for childcare places for 0-2 year olds in the area.

By enabling children to start in the nursery from 9 months old a transition point for some children will be removed. Those more disadvantaged children who are eligible for 2-year-old funding may currently go to different providers. They may then come back to the school at age 3 into the nursery or at 4 into the reception class. With the proposed new places, they will be able to start with us when they are eligible for the targeted two year old funding.

Being able to offer places from 9 months will provide greater consistency and continuity for children before starting at school and enable staff to make a more significant impact and identify children's needs well before they start in the reception class. Parents will still need to make a separate application to Devon County Council for a place in the reception class.

Parents will have the option to choose nursery places between 8:00 and 6:00 all year round or 8:00 and 6:00 term times only. The same hours are available for primary aged children in our before and after school provision. During the school holidays all nursery places for 0-4 year olds will operate from the former children's centre building which will become part of the school site. Parents will have a convenient one stop drop off and pick up for their children.

The Trust is required to ask the Department for Education's permission to acquire the children's centre building; this will be requested alongside the consultation process.

We are fortunate to have a team of qualified and experienced staff across our Trust. Some of these staff will help to set up the new nursery and work there whilst it becomes established. At a time when recruiting qualified staff is difficult this will be beneficial and ensure there are no delays with opening.

Capital and planning

If this proposal is approved, Devon County Council, who own the Children's Centre building, will transfer the freehold ownership of the building to Cornerstone Academy Trust to enable the Trust to run the nursery provision. Some internal reconfigurations of the building will be required including improvements to the outdoor and indoor space and facilities to ensure the building is suitable for nursery provision. Devon County Council are providing a capital grant towards the costs of the works required.

This proposal will not affect the Published Admission Number (PAN) for the school, nor the capacity, and will not put pressure on classroom space for school aged children.

Consultation and decision-making process

This consultation will run from 20th June to 11th July 2025.

Following the end of the consultation period, the Trustees of Cornerstone Academy Trust will meet to consider the consultation responses and decide whether or not to make an application to the Department for Education's (DfE) South West Region's Group.

The application (a Tier 1 Significant Change application) to the DfE will include all the feedback received to the consultation. It is the DfE's Regions Group who will consider the application, and outcome of the consultation, and decide whether or not to approve the change to the age range.

Responding to the consultation

The Trust welcome responses on this proposal by the closing date of 11th July 2025 either by:

Emailing: admin@tcat.education – please title the email 'Nursery Consultation'

Or by writing to: Cornerstone Academy Trust, Nursery Consultation, Broadclyst Community Primary School, School Lane, Broadclyst, Devon, EX5 3JG.

All responses to the consultation will be considered and will be shared with the school's leadership team, Board of Directors and Trustees. Responses will also be shared with the DfE's South West Regions Group as the decision-maker, but we will not send individual responses to any specific points made.

Please see the Trust's Privacy Notice explaining how we process personal data:

<https://tcat.education/privacy-notices/>

Yours sincerely,



Jonathan Bishop
Executive Headteacher

