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**Consultation Letter**

**Lowering the school age at**

**Our Lady & St Thomas from 3-11 to 2-11**

December 2024

The Directors of Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust in partnership with the governing committee of Our Lady & St Thomas, are proposing a change to the age range of the school from 3-11 to 2-11. As part of the process, we would like to hear your views on the proposal. Currently children who join Our Lady &St Thomas at the age of 3, come from a variety of settings within the locality. Under the new proposals, children aged 2 upwards, would formally become part of the same structure as the school within an expansion to our EYFS unit.

**Proposal**

We propose to lower the age range of Our Lady & St Thomas from 3 to 11 years to 2 to 11 years from Autumn 2025, to ensure the school meets the needs of local families and children. Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust in partnership with the Local Governing Committee of Our Lady and St Thomas is consulting you on a proposal to lower the admissions age to enable us to offer. This proposal will allow us to meet the needs of the community we serve in relation to early years education and will ensure a consistent setting and approach to learning for our youngest children.

**Why are we proposing to lower the entry age of the children joining our school?**

We want to support the government’s policy on providing early years education for children in our local community through a secure, stimulating and high-quality early years nursery setting. This will complement our existing provision for children in our reception class.

In addition to this the nursery will offer the following:

* Parents will be able to claim the universal childcare entitlement.
* Both full time (30 hours) and flexible places are available.
* Nursery places will be available Monday to Friday.
* Nursery provision will ensure a seamless transition for those children who obtain a place in our reception class.
* Wrap around provision from **7.45am - 5pm**

Our aim is that children in our community will attend nursery and then successfully transition to our reception class. This will enable learning opportunities to be maximised across the early years for children from 2 to 5 years of age.

***In accordance with the national admissions code, parents of nursery aged children would need to apply in the normal admission round if seeking to secure a place in the reception class the following year.***

**Will the proposal have any impact on the school’s admission arrangements?**

Currently, we offer 18 Reception places, each year, for our children. It is proposed that we would offer up to 26 full-time places in the nursery (21 places for 3-year-olds and 5 2-year olds). This would consist of an N2 class and a N1 class. N1 would be made up of up to 5 children aged 2 years old. The number of allowed children has been predetermined by the Directors and Local Governing Body in consultation with the Local Authority.

The current number on roll is 112; these numbers do not include nursery children. Please note there is no automatic right for nursery aged children to gain a reception place at the school.

**Do the governors and staff support the proposal?**

Bishop Hogarth Catholic Education Trust Directors in partnership with the Local Governing Body of Our Lady & St Thomas and staff support the proposal, as they believe our school community and future pupils would benefit from the lowering of our school age to allow for nursery provision.

**Will there be extra traffic and how will you reduce the impact of this?**

There may be a small increase in traffic. However, initial enquires indicate that the nursery would be mainly filled by siblings of those children already coming to Our Lady & St Thomas or families living within walking distance of the school.

**What are the next stages in the process?**

Responses will be received throughout the consultation period, which begins on **Monday 2nd December and ends Monday 23rd December 2024 at 12 noon.** These will be analysed and a short consultation report will be produced, which will be published on the school website.

**How can I respond to this consultation?**

Please complete the consultation response form below with any relevant comments and return it to the school by email at [office@olst.bhcet.org.uk](mailto:office@olst.bhcet.org.uk)

Alternatively, if you require a hard copy of this form, please contact the school office on 01388 746336

Ruth Veitch

Headteacher

CC

Parents

Parish Priest

Diocese

Governors

Staff

Local AuthorityWe

Local schools (circulated by the LA)

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Trust and school website

**Text, logo, company name

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**Consultation Letter Lowering the school age at**

**Our Lady and St Thomas Catholic Academy**

**from 3-11 to 2-11**

**Response to Our Lady and St Thomas Catholic Academy consultation form:**

I support the proposal to lower the school age at Our Lady and St Thomas from 3-11 to 2-11: Yes/No

I do not support proposal to lower the school age at Our Lady and St Thomas from 3-11 to 2-11: Yes/No

Please return the above form via email (office@olst.bhcet.org.uk) or by posting directly to the Headteacher, Ruth Veitch, Our Lady and St Thomas Catholic Primary, Cumberland Terrace, Willington, Co. Durham DH7 7HQ by noon 23rd December 2024.

We would welcome your views;