



Thatcham Vision Report 2015

Part 3: Childcare and Early Years Learning

REPORT OF THE ACTIVITIES AND FINDINGS OF THE CHILDCARE & EARLY YEARS LEARNING TOPIC TEAM

10. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

10.1. Document Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present the findings and recommendations of the Childcare and Early Years Learning Topic Team. It sets this in the context of the refresh of the Thatcham Vision Plan and sets out the remit and the membership of the team.

10.2. Team remit

The Childcare and Early Years Learning Topic Team was formed in 2013 as part of the refresh of Thatcham Vision's Action Plan with a remit to consider current issues and the necessary requirements to overcome them. This is in order to provide a better quality of provision focussing on additional facilities that may enhance childcare and learning in Thatcham as well as looking at how the provision will need to be developed as the population grows.

10.3. Team Composition

The Childcare and Early Years Learning Topic Team was formed in September 2013 as part of the Thatcham Vision's action plan refresh process. The team was fortunate to be made up of local volunteers who are all very experienced in the field of childcare and learning.

The team was chaired by Sheila Ellison who also previously chaired Thatcham Youth and works as a governor at Thatcham Park Primary School and Kennet Academy. Mandy Cole, Manager of the outstanding Pied Piper Pre-School and Marilyn Cornwell, Headteacher of Thatcham Park Primary School contributed with their knowledge of running a learning establishment. Chris Garner, local resident and grandmother provided a view for this normally unrepresented group and Zoe Hammond and David Morris, both local child-minders (Ofsted rated outstanding) represented the view of child minders and of local parents. The team were also fortunate to have the input of Debbie Rowe, Senior Children's Centre Manager in Thatcham; Richard Thompson, Governor at Parsons Down School and Jane Tubbs, Operations Manager at Tiger's Day Nurseries.

11. APPROACH

This topic was not included in the first Parish Plan and although issues in this area did not feature heavily when the community was asked for two things to start, stop and continue in Thatcham, it came second only to Community Safety in the list of topics people most wanted Vision to review.

Overall the household survey of 1,870 residents that expressed an opinion showed that: 57% agreed that Thatcham has plenty of affordable childcare but 28% felt that the cost of childcare has prevented them from going to work. Residents who had a child/children currently in pre-school (37.7% of the whole) told Vision whether they had struggled to

get a pre-school place in Thatcham: of those 31.9% had, 21% due to lack of places and 7.5% due to cost. When asked whether children attending primary school were able to attend the school of their choice a resounding 79.4% received the 1st choice and 11.7% received their 2nd choice place. Only 11.7% were allocated an alternative with 6.5% of these being outside of Thatcham.

2011 Census data shows that pupil attainment in Key stages 1 and 2 for Thatcham are in line with the national average. Pupil attainment in key stage 4 however, are well below the national mean.

The topic team therefore considered how to maintain and improve the quality of the current provision for pre-school and primary education as well as provide additional activities in the locality.

12. TEAM FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

12.1. Action EYL001: Press the need for enhanced and additional facilities in Thatcham for secondary school children.

The aim of this action is to provide all secondary school-age pupils with a choice of going to a school in their own town, also eliminating the financial burden of school transport costs for local parents.

Kennet School is the only secondary school in Thatcham. The alternative school is Trinity School, Shaw. Trinity School is 3 miles from Thatcham. There is school transport at a cost of £420 per child with 30% discount for any additional fare paying sibling. This is considered expensive by families in the town.

Walking or cycling to school was considered as an alternative. Trinity is within the 3 mile walk to school policy, set out by WBC's Education Department although this would mean travelling along the busy A4 and is considered by many to be unsafe.

Kennet Academy hosts approximately 1,700 pupils with a 6th Form. The school site is tight on size with limited parking spaces. WBC have no plans to change the catchment area at the present time but the Academy could do so should they wish.

Both schools are undoubtedly nearing "full" but the future of secondary education in West Berkshire is unclear.

Options for Expansion

1. To have a school on two different sites. One as a sixth form and the other without.
8. Provide a new site for Francis Bailey School and develop the site for Kennet School. (Francis Bailey Junior School backs onto Kennet School).
9. Purchase land at Thatcham Garden Centre, should it become available. (3,000 hectares)

WBC hold regular site selection meetings to consider possible sites for use.

Thatcham is unable to support any large scale housing development until this issue is resolved and therefore is unable to attract new funding from S106 contributions. Thatcham has undergone vast development previously and so it is suggested that funds are provided from monies already received.

This action requires the following:

1. Determine the future need for an additional senior school.

- 10. Liaise with WBC and local schools to agree and establish a plan for the future.
- 11. Engage with WBC, potential landowners and developers to ensure that the project is viable.

When the community were surveyed regarding their support of the above action the following results were returned:

Press the need for another secondary school in Thatcham.	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	37.5%
Agree	27.5%
Disagree	10.0%
Strongly Disagree	5.0%
No Opinion	20.0%

12.2. Action EYL002: Discourage Primary Schools from expanding any greater than a three form entry.

In recent years there has been a general growth in Primary school numbers across the county. To increase the intake of pupils at a school, consideration is taken from what the site can support, car parking, highways views and travel plans.

Thatcham Park school had increased from 1½ form entry to 2 form entry and an Early Years/Children’s’ Centre had been developed. There are development plans to increase Spurcroft School to 2½ form entry, which was considered as sufficient.

It is considered more cost effective to create more spaces in a current school rather than a new build although WBC are not planning to increase a school in excess of 3 form entry and consideration to expand schools would only be given, should they provide good quality education and teaching based on OFSTED reports. Current primary school plans are sufficient at the current time.

When the community were surveyed regarding their support of the above action the following results were returned:

Encourage Primary Schools to limit their growth to three classes per intake.	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	25.0%
Agree	30.0%
Disagree	7.5%
Strongly Disagree	5.0%
No Opinion	32.5%

12.3. Action EYL003: Support a scheme to encourage/attract high quality teachers to work in Thatcham's schools.

A larger proportion of schools in Thatcham have recently been rated as "requiring improvement". High quality teachers are required to help to bring these schools back on track.

The provision and promotion of affordable housing through local housing associations and the increased availability of shared-ownership with young professionals in mind is required to lure the best teachers to West Berkshire. Also, head hunting the UK's top teachers could be completed as standard procedure with training and 'fast track' opportunities for the best university graduates.

Previously, West Berkshire Council has promoted schemes to encourage more skilled workers to the area via publicity, key worker development schemes and mortgage incentives.

This is a West Berkshire wide problem and is currently being considered by WBC.

When the community were surveyed regarding their support of the above action the following results were returned:

Support a scheme to encourage/attract high quality teachers to work in Thatcham's schools.	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	60.0%
Agree	25.0%
Disagree	2.5%
Strongly Disagree	2.5%
No Opinion	10.0%

12.4. Action EYL004 - Investigate and report on road safety at each nursery, pre-school and school in Thatcham.

As part of the School Safety Project, WBC investigate and introduce measures to improve safety outside a school and on identified routes to the school. There is an approved list of schools to be investigated, which is prioritised on a number of factors with the top schools being included in the annual Traffic & Road Safety programme approved by Individual Decision at the start of each financial year.

WBC also provide schools with a training booklet listing the road safety education training services available on request.

Local groups will enhance this work by independently assessing other local schools as well as additional childcare facilities not included in this project. This information would be shared with WBC. The group will also consider schemes for rectifying any issues found.

When the community were surveyed regarding their support of the above action the following results were returned:

Investigate and report on road safety at each nursery, pre-school and school in Thatcham.	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	47.5%
Agree	37.5%
Disagree	5.0%
Strongly Disagree	2.5%
No Opinion	7.5%

12.5. Action EYL005: Encourage the further utilisation of Thatcham's children's centres to provide services in line with the size of the population.

The Children's Centres are currently under financial pressure which has meant that although the centres remain available, opening hours have been reduced. Further people resources are needed to keep the children's centres open longer and to provide additional services for the community. Additional needs should be identified in order to plan future provision (access to birth data is important here) as well as to further encourage family learning and parenting courses. Community groups will also be sought to enhance the current provision with minimum cost.

When the community were surveyed regarding their support of the above action the following results were returned:

Encourage the further utilisation of Thatcham's children centres to provide services in line with the size of the population.	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	50.0%
Agree	37.5%
Disagree	5.0%
Strongly Disagree	0.0%
No Opinion	7.5%

12.6. Action EYL006: Introduce and promote a scheme to encourage local child minders to improve their Ofsted rating.

Child minders are a commercial enterprise and outside the remit of the local authority. A new scheme should be set up at the Children's Centres where child-minders can meet regularly and share best practice. Outstanding Ofsted rated child-minders in the area should be invited to share their experiences. This may lead onto an opportunity to offer additional workshops for this skillset and therefore attract additional income from room hire.

When the community were surveyed regarding their support of the above action the following results were returned:

Introduce and promote a scheme to encourage local child-minders to improve their Ofsted rating.	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	27.0%
Agree	32.4%
Disagree	18.9%
Strongly Disagree	5.4%
No Opinion	16.2%

12.7. Action EYL007: Support low cost out of school activities and events e.g. playdays and sports coaching.

Previously, Thatcham Town Council had run a number of free play days in parks around Thatcham to celebrate the Queen's jubilee and the 2012 London Olympics. These events were incredibly popular which confirmed there was a local demand for low cost activities during the holidays.

Other activities during school breaks, as well as after school clubs, can be quite expensive and this excludes some children from taking part. It was therefore agreed that an action to support, initiate and acquire funding for free and low cost events for Thatcham's youth would be included in the Vision plan.

WBC Public Health support a number of schemes that may help support and/or fund local events, clubs & activities:

- The Green Bag Scheme
WBC Physical Activity Coordinator, small scale sports equipment available FOC
- Get Berkshire Active - 'All Sports for All Sorts'
An externally run scheme to encourage physical activity for 4-11 year olds through training local volunteers to deliver sports coaching.
- Berkshire Youth
Help with establishing youth clubs and running sessions.

When the community were surveyed regarding their support of the above action the following results were returned:

Support low cost out of school activities and events e.g. play days and sports coaching.	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	35.0%
Agree	50.0%
Disagree	0.0%
Strongly Disagree	2.5%
No Opinion	12.5%

12.8. Action EYL008: Provide additional shade in play areas across Thattham.

To provide families who use the parks and play areas the opportunity to stay longer and offer some protection from the sun it was agreed that more shade should be provided, perhaps planting or screening. It was noted that some of the play areas belong to WBC, others to TTC.

When the community were surveyed regarding their support of the above action the following results were returned:

Provide additional shade in play areas across Thattham.	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	15.0%
Agree	50.0%
Disagree	7.5%
Strongly Disagree	0.0%
No Opinion	27.5%

12.9. Action EYL009: Invite all pre-schools, primary and secondary schools to take part in community events.

The value to local schools and their children when taking part in the community events run by Thattham Town Council was discussed. As some were not aware of these events it was suggested that there was a need to make contact not only with all of the schools, pre-schools and nurseries but also their PTA's. This would in turn promote the events increasing their success and ensure they were more inclusive.

When the community were surveyed regarding their support of the above action the following results were returned:

Invite all pre-schools, primary and secondary schools to take part in community events.	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	30.8%
Agree	59.0%
Disagree	2.6%
Strongly Disagree	0.0%
No Opinion	7.7%

12.10. Action EYL010: Improve Thatcham Town Council's welcome pack by including information on facilities for children and their families.

A welcome pack is available to all new residents to Thatcham although not many are given out as it is not widely marketed. The pack also requires regular updates. The pack includes a very useful Town Guide published by TTC. Other key items to include are details of the children's centre, pre-schools and child-minders and the Family Information Service.

Increased distribution of the packs could be made by providing them to local housing associations and estate agents rather than receiving the odd request from new residents.

When the community were surveyed regarding their support of the above action the following results were returned:

Improve Thatcham Town Council's welcome pack by including information on facilities for children and their families.	
Answer Options	Response Percent
Strongly Agree	25.6%
Agree	51.3%
Disagree	2.6%
Strongly Disagree	0.0%
No Opinion	20.5%

13. CHILDCARE & EARLY YEARS LEARNING ACTION PLAN

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PARISH ACTION PLAN - CHILDCARE & EARLY YEARS LEARNING								
PARISH OF THATTHAM								Date Plan Adopted
Ref	Objective	Actions	Priority H/M/L	Start Date	Planned Finish Date	Project Manager/Lead Partner	Other Partners	Justification & comments
Overall the household survey of 1870 residents that expressed an opinion showed that: 57% agreed that Thattham has plenty of affordable childcare, 28% felt that the cost of childcare has prevented them from going to work								
The results of a further consultation, with a sample of 270 residents, provides the following justification for each action.								
EYL001	STRONGER, PROSPEROUS, HEALTHY, GREENER, SAFER	Press the need for enhanced and additional facilities in Thattham for secondary school children .	H	2016	ongoing	TV	TTC, KENNET, ACADEMY, TRINITY	65% support/agreement from follow up survey (only 10% disagreeing). Provide all secondary school-age pupils with a choice of going to a school in their town. Reduce the financial burden of school transport costs for local parents.
EYL002	STRONGER	Encourage Primary Schools to limit their growth to three classes per intake.	H	2016	ongoing	WBC	TTC, TV, HEADS & GOVERNERS	60% support/agreement from follow up survey (only 12.5% disagreeing). Not letting schools grow too big.
EYL003	STRONGER, PROSPEROUS	Support a scheme to encourage/attract high quality teachers to work in Thattham's schools.	H	2016	2017	WBC	HEADS & GOVERNERS	85% support/agreement from follow up survey (only 5% disagreeing). Examples include key worker development schemes and/or mortgage incentives
EYL004	SAFER	Investigate and report on road safety at each nursery, pre-school and school in Thattham.	H	2017	2018	WBC	TTC, TV, HEADS & GOVERNERS	85% support/agreement from follow up survey (only 7.5% disagreeing). Include the need for speed restrictions and railings
EYL005	STRONGER, HEALTHY	Encourage the further utilisation of Thattham's children's centres to provide services in line with the size of the population.	H	2016	2017	WBC	CHILDREN'S CENTRE STAFF, TTC, TV, THATTHAM YOUTH, ETC	87.5% support/agreement from follow up survey (only 5% disagreeing). Further people resources are needed to keep the children's centres open longer and to provide additional services for the community. Provide birth data to enable them to plan future provision and further encourage family learning and parenting courses.
EYL006	STRONGER, PROSPEROUS, SAFER,	Introduce and promote a scheme to encourage local childminders to improve their Ofsted rating.	M	2017	2018	WBC	CHILDREN'S CENTRE STAFF, TTC, TV	59.8% support/agreement from follow up survey (only 24.3% disagreeing). A scheme at the Children's Centres where childminders meet. Outstanding childminders in the area to attend and share good practice.
EYL007	STRONGER, HEALTHY	Support low cost out of school activities and events e.g. playdays and sports coaching.	M	Started	ongoing	Vision	WBC, TTC, SOVEREIGN, THATTHAM YOUTH, LOCAL CLUBS	85% support/agreement from follow up survey (only 2.5% disagreeing).
EYL008	SAFER, HEALTHY	Provide additional shade in play areas across Thattham.	M	2016	2017	TTC	WBC, TV, SOVEREIGN	65% support/agreement from follow up survey (only 7.5% disagreeing) Perhaps through planting or screening

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EYL009	STRONGER, HEALTHY, COMMUNICATION	Invite all pre-schools, primary and secondary schools to take part in community events	M	Started	ongoing	TTC	TV	89.8% support/agreement from follow up survey (only 2.6% disagreeing) Contact should be made to the schools and their PTAs
EYL010	STRONGER, COMMUNICATION	Improve Thatcham Town Council's welcome pack by including information on facilities for children and their families.	M	2017	2018	TTC	TV, FAMILY INFORMATION SERVICE, CHILDREN'S CENTRES	76.9% support/agreement from follow up survey (only 2.6% disagreeing) Key items to include are details of the children's centre, pre-schools and childminders and the Family Information Service.
Safer (e.g. Reducing anti-social behaviour, reducing speed on roads, emergency planning)					Greener (e.g. reducing carbon footprint in the community, reducing waste and increasing recycling, encourage consumption of local produce, increasing diversity of local wildlife).			
Prosperous (e.g. Supporting economy of villages, Tourism, Supporting employment in rural areas)					Stronger (e.g. including everyone, fostering a sense of belonging and participation in community life, similar life opportunities - including accessible services for all).			
Healthy (e.g. fostering a sense of place and belonging, improving health and well-being of local people and young people, promoting independence of vulnerable people)					ALSO - COMMUNICATION (e.g. what important messages should be shared with the community for the benefit of the community).			

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Enquiries should be addressed to:

Project Manager
Thatcham Vision
Thatcham Town Council Offices
Brownsfield Way
Thatcham
Berkshire
RG18 3HF

pm@thatchamvision.net