

Report to: **Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability**

Date: **4 November 2019**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Proposed SEN (Special Educational Needs) specialist facility at Priory School and Robertsbridge Community College**

Purpose of report: **To seek Lead Member approval to publish statutory notices in respect of a proposal to establish new specialist facilities at Priory School and Robertsbridge Community College**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) authorise the publication of a statutory notice in respect of a proposal to establish two new SEN (Special Educational Needs) specialist facilities for up to 12 pupils each at Priory School and Robertsbridge Community College with effect from 1 September 2020; and**
 - 2) delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to amend the proposals prior to their publication if required.**
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1. Background

1.1 East Sussex County Council recently undertook a review of SEN provision in the county. One of the identified strands of the review was specialist facilities in mainstream schools. The aim was to review the current provision of specialist facilities and determine whether it is meeting the needs of SEN pupils across East Sussex. The review also sought to identify any gaps in provision.

1.2 Specialist facilities are located within a mainstream school and provide specific support to a limited number of pupils with an education and health care plan (EHCP) naming a specific primary SEN.

1.3 The aspiration in East Sussex is that specialist facilities promote an ethos of inclusion and help to integrate their pupils into the mainstream school for as much of their learning time as their needs allow. The facility should also provide access to a base within the school for more intensive support when required. The East Sussex model increasingly expects that the expertise of staff within the facility provide significant benefits to the rest of the school and other schools in the local area to support all pupils with SEN and create a fully inclusive learning environment. The development of new specialist provision in mainstream schools is facilitating further development of school to school partnerships through a strategic governance group. A revised service level agreement sets out the expectations for all facilities.

2. The Proposal

2.1 The review concluded that there is a gap in specialist provision in mainstream secondary schools for pupils with a primary need of specific learning difficulties, with associated special educational needs (e.g. anxiety and high functioning autism) in both the west and the east of the county. The Council would like to establish two facilities for up to 12 pupils each at Priory School and Robertsbridge Community College to address this provision gap.

2.2 There are already a number of specialist facilities for primary age pupils in the west and east of the county. Developing new secondary facilities in both of these areas would allow progression for pupils and continuity of support to aid the transition of pupils from primary specialist facilities for whom a secondary facility is the most appropriate next stage. This will assist in reducing the increasing trend of transition from mainstream primary school to special secondary schools. Providing early intervention at the start of their secondary phase through a facility place will address needs and enable pupil's integration into the mainstream school.

2.3 Pupils within the facility are on the roll of the mainstream school and are in addition to the Published Admission Number (PAN). The school receives additional funding from the DfE (Department for Education) and the Council to support the child. Placements are determined by the Council according to clear criteria, and would be drawn from a wider geographical area than the school's usual community area on a needs basis.

2.4 The school would have a designated base to provide them with capacity for additional numbers of pupils with higher levels of need. The base would be integral to the school and would provide additional facilities so that the children can be taught in small groups according to their need and have access to a quiet space or nurture room. Funding to develop these facilities would come from the Council's approved capital programme.

2.5 The specialist facility would be integral to the operation of the school and, as a result, would be managed by the headteacher, governors and the senior leadership team. The specialist facility would be for identified pupils with an EHCP with a primary need of specific learning difficulties, with associated special educational needs (eg. anxiety and high functioning autism).

2.6 The amount of time each pupil spends with their mainstream peers for lessons and recreation would depend on the needs of the individual. Some pupils would need to be taught individually or in small groups for parts of the school day but may be able to access some of the curriculum with their peers. Arrangements would need to be flexible to reflect educational needs and social needs, anxiety levels and personal circumstances. Professionals and the pupil's parent/carer would be involved in bespoke planning of a graduated programme to increase resilience and prepare for increased further independence.

2.7 Pupils in the facility would have their special educational needs reviewed regularly in discussion with parents/carers and professionals to ensure that the facility remains the most appropriate placement to meet these needs.

3. Consultation

3.1 Establishing a new specialist facility at a maintained school is considered to be a significant change requiring a prescribed alteration to the school.

3.2 The Council consulted with key stakeholders and interested parties over a three week period between 20 September and 11 October 2019 on the proposal.

3.3 The consultation document was available on the County Council's website and interested parties were invited to give their views on the proposal. The Council used social media to inform the local community of the consultation. Details of the consultation were also communicated by the schools to their school communities. A copy of the consultation documents for both schools is shown in **Appendix 1** of this report.

Consultation Responses regarding the proposal for Priory School

3.4 By the end of the consultation period 76 responses had been received. Of the responses:

- 68 (89.5%) support the proposal
- 2 (2.6%) do not support the proposal
- 6 (7.9%) were undecided whether they support the proposal.

3.5 Respondents identified themselves as:

Interest Group	No. of Responses
Governor at the school	1
Member of staff at the school	12
member of the local community	12
Not Answered	1
Other (please say)*	14
Parent / carer of a child at the school	35
Pupil at the school	1
Grand Total	76

**Parents of SEN children/young people attending different schools, school staff at different schools/areas, interested parents.*

3.6 It should be noted that some respondents ticked more than one box when identifying themselves.

3.7 In summary there was a positive response to the consultation. Those in favour of the proposal recognise the need for specialist provision for pupils with SEN in the local area. A complete list of responses to the consultation is available in the Cabinet and Members Rooms.

Consultation Responses regarding the proposal for Robertsbridge Community College

3.8 By the end of the consultation period 137 responses had been received. Of the responses:

- 114 (83%) support the proposal
- 12 (9%) do not support the proposal
- 11 (8%) were undecided whether they support the proposal.

3.9 Respondents identified themselves as:

Interest Group	No. of Responses
Member of staff at the school	5
Member of the local community	25
Not Answered	2
Other (please say)*	19
Parent / carer of a child at the school	82
Pupil at the school	4
Member of staff at the school	5
Grand Total	137

**Parents of SEN children/young people attending different schools, school staff at different schools/areas, interested parents.*

3.10 It should be noted that some respondents ticked more than one box when identifying themselves.

3.11 In summary there was a positive response to the consultation. Those in favour of the proposal recognise the need for specialist provision for pupils with SEN in the local area. The main reasons given for not supporting the proposal were concerns about impact of the new SEN cohort on the education being provided to existing pupils. A complete list of responses to the consultation is available in the Cabinet and Members Rooms.

4. Equality Impact Assessment

4.1 The Lead Member is required to have 'due regard' to the duties set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Public Sector Equality Duty) in determining these proposals. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) for each proposal is being undertaken to identify any equality implications of this proposal and to identify any appropriate mitigations. The EqIA will be reported to Lead Member prior to a final decision being taken on the proposals.

5. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

5.1 In conclusion the Council has identified a gap in specialist provision in mainstream secondary schools for pupils with a primary need of of specific learning difficulties, with associated special educational needs (e.g. anxiety and high functioning autism) in both the west and east of the county and the Council would like to establish two facilities for up to 12 pupils, one at Priory School and the other at Robertsbridge Community College to address this provision gap.

5.2 The majority of respondents to the consultations support the proposals to establish the two specialist facilities.

5.3 In accordance with the prescribed process established by the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 a statutory notice would need to be

published on the Council's website and in the local newspaper in November 2019. Publication of the notice would trigger a further 4 week period of consultation, known as the representation period, when interested parties can comment on, or object, to the proposal. Within two months of the end of the representation period, the Lead Member must make a final decision taking into account the views of all those affected by the proposal or who have an interest in it.

5.4 It is anticipated that a final decision on the proposal would be taken at the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability meeting in January 2019.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Angharad Davies
Councillor Ruth O'Keeffe

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Consultation Documents