

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

Date: **22 July 2021**

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

Title of report: **Proposed extension to the designation of the specialist facility at Wallands Community Primary School**

Purpose of report: **To seek Lead Member approval to publish a statutory notice in respect of a proposal to extend the designation of the specialist facility at Wallands Community Primary School.**

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member is recommended to:

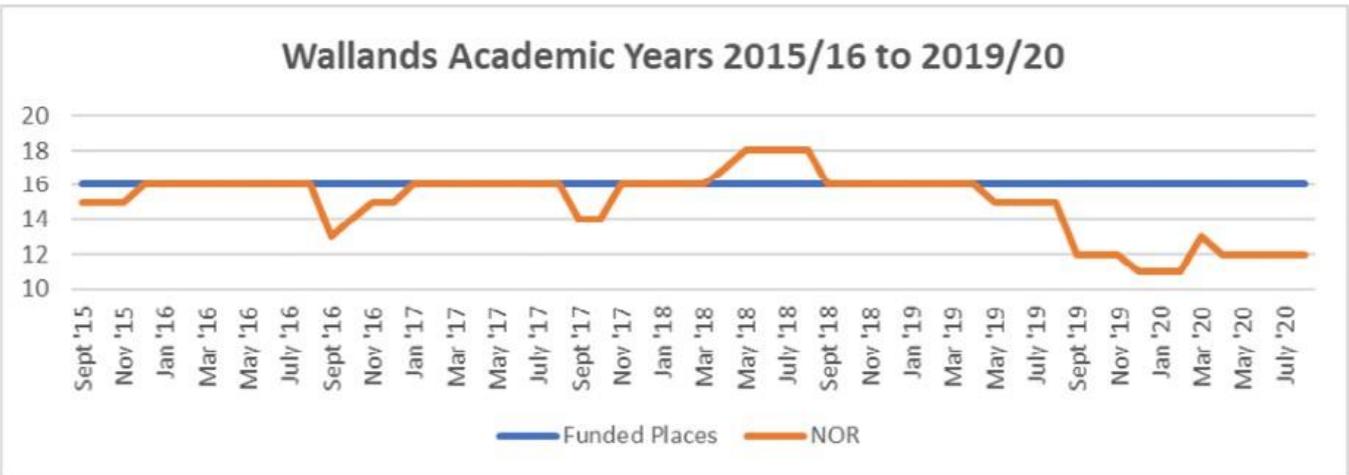
- 1) authorise the publication of a statutory notice in respect of a proposal to extend the designation the specialist facility at Wallands Community Primary School; and
- 2) delegate authority to the Director of Children’s Services to amend the proposal prior to its publication if required.

1. Background

1.1 Wallands Community Primary School has a designated specialist facility (the facility) for up to 16 pupils aged 4-11 with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN). East Sussex County Council (the local authority) is proposing to extend the designation of the facility at the school from 1 September 2022, to also include pupils aged 4-11 with a primary need of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

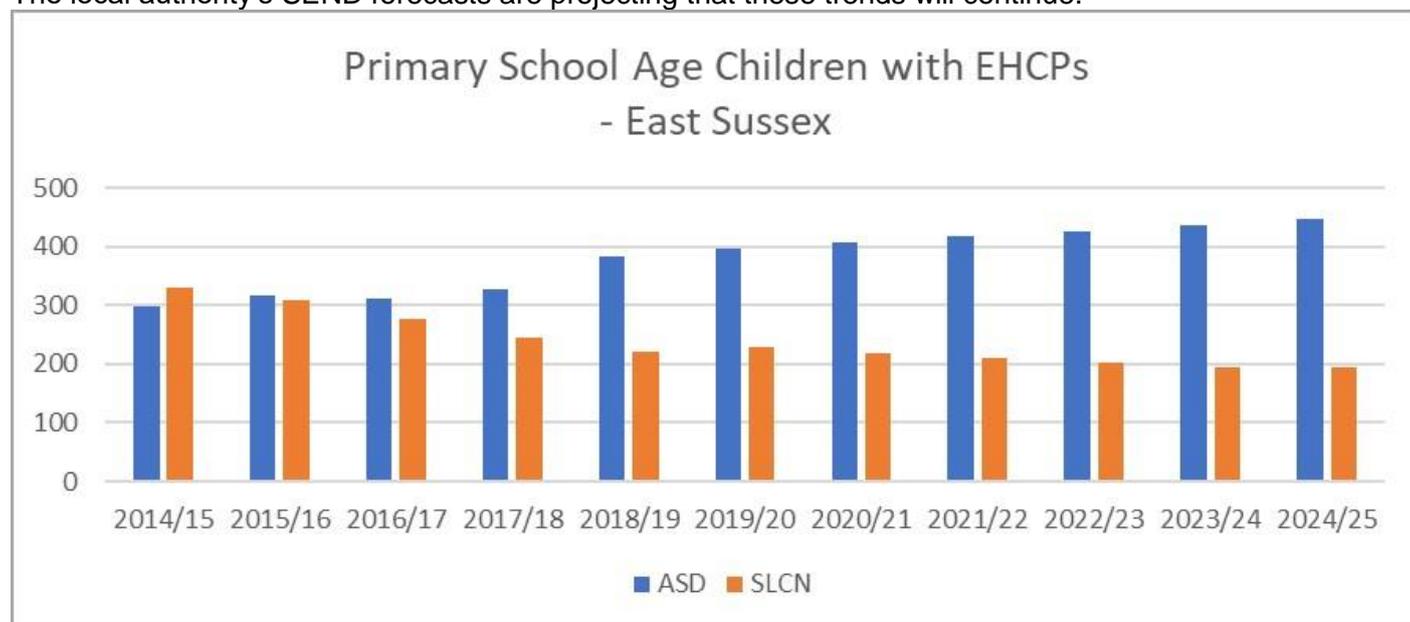
1.2 The local authority wishes to extend the designation of the facility to ensure it can meet the needs of local pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN), reflecting the changes being seen to the type of SEN being presented.

1.3 Since 2019/20 the number of pupils within the facility has fallen, with numbers under capacity each month. This is demonstrated in the table below.



1.4 The decrease in pupil numbers is in line with the trend being seen across the county of fewer pupils with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) presenting with a primary need of SLCN. Since 2014/15 the number of primary age pupils with an EHCP for SLCN has decreased from 329 pupils to 218 in

2020/21. Over the same period, the number of pupils with an EHCP for ASD has risen from 298 to 406. The local authority's SEND forecasts are projecting that these trends will continue.



1.5 Wallands Community Primary School has worked closely with the local authority over the last five years to expand the range of SEN support that can be met within the facility. This has resulted in pupils with a broader spectrum of need than SLCN being supported by the facility and an increasing number of pupils with ASD in addition to SLCN.

1.6 Across East Sussex there are three primary specialist facilities in mainstream schools for pupils aged 4-11 with ASD as their primary need, including new facilities at Churchwood Primary Academy in Hastings and Grovelands Community Primary School in Hailsham. The local authority's SEND forecasting has identified that there is a need for more specialist facilities that cater for pupils with this need, including in Lewes.

1.7 Having taken into consideration the changing nature of the type of SEN needs being presented and forecast in East Sussex, the local authority proposes to extend the designation of the facility at Wallands Community Primary School from 1 September 2022, to also include pupils aged 4-11 with a primary need of ASD, with associated SLCN.

1.8 The local authority expects the proposal to have a positive impact on provision at the school. Specialist staff will continue to work with pupils in the facility and also work with teaching staff across the school to develop skills and expertise in responding to SEN needs and creating an inclusive environment.

1.9 Should the proposed change go ahead, new pupils admitted to the facility from September 2022 would include those with a primary need of ASD and associated SLCN, alongside pupils with a primary need of SLCN. The local authority believes that the facility is well placed to support children with both of these needs.

2. Consultation and statutory process

2.1 The local authority has a statutory responsibility to secure sufficient school places, including for pupils with SEN. Before the designation of the facility can be extended, the local authority is required to follow a statutory process set out in the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

2.2 In accordance with the regulations the local authority undertook a period of consultation with the school community, local schools and key stakeholders on the proposed changes. The consultation period ran from 14 May to 17 June 2021. In addition, the local authority held a virtual parent's meeting on 9 June 2021 to explain the proposal in more detail and answer parent's questions.

2.3 By the close of the consultation period 15 responses had been received. Respondents were largely in favour of the proposal, as can be seen in the breakdown below.

- 11 (73%) respondents support the proposal
- 1 (7%) respondent does not support the proposal
- 1 (7%) respondent was undecided
- 2 (13%) respondents did not answer

2.4 In summary, those in favour of the proposal recognise the benefits it would bring to pupils with a primary need of ASD and associated SLCN, to the school and to the wider community. They suggested that being part of an inclusive school means pupils are able to learn together and that it would be good for the existing pupils to understand more about ASD and learn alongside pupils with ASD. The main reason given for not supporting the proposal was that the facility should remain for use by pupils with SLCN and that the teaching should be focused more on supporting those pupils. Concern was also raised about the negative impact the facility might have on mainstream provision e.g. staffing numbers and behaviour management. A complete list of responses to the consultation is available in the Cabinet and Members Rooms.

2.5 Before the local authority is able to proceed with the proposal, it must publish a statutory notice in accordance with the regulations, providing interested parties with a further opportunity to comment on/object to the proposal. It is intended that the statutory notice would be published on the local authority's website in August 2021. The notice would also be published in the local newspaper and posted on the entrances to the school. Publication of the notice would trigger a four-week period of representation during which interested parties could comment on the proposal.

2.6 The local authority has a duty to determine each proposal within two months of the end of the representation period. We anticipate that a final decision on the proposal would be taken at the Lead Member meeting on 18 October 2021.

3. Equality Impact Assessment

3.1 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 the proposal. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) is being undertaken to identify any equality implications of the proposal and to identify any appropriate mitigations. The EqIA will be reported to Lead Member prior to a final decision being taken on the proposal.

4. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

4.1 The local authority wishes to extend the designation of the specialist facility at Wallands Community Primary School to ensure it can meet the needs of local pupils with SEN, reflecting the changes being seen to the type of SEN being presented. Since 2014/15 the number of primary age pupils with an EHCP for SLCN has decreased, while, over the same period, the number of pupils with an EHCP for ASD has risen. The local authority's SEN forecasts are projecting that these trends will continue.

4.2 Feedback from the initial consultation was largely positive, with 11 out of 15 respondents supportive of the proposed changes.

4.3 For these reasons the Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) authorise the publication of a statutory notice in respect of a proposal to extend the designation of the specialist facility at Wallands Community Primary School; and
- 2) delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to amend the proposal prior to its publication, if required.

STUART GALLIMORE

Director of Children's Services

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LOCAL MEMBERS

Councillor Wendy Maples

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Wallands Community Primary School – Consultation Summary