

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

Date: 7 July 2025

By: Director of Children's Services

Title of report: Proposed specialist facility at Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School

Purpose of report: To seek Lead Member approval to publish a statutory proposal to establish a new specialist facility at Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) approve publication of a statutory proposal to establish a specialist facility for up to 12 pupils at Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School; and
 - 2) delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to amend the proposal prior to its publication if required.
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1. Background

1.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for all pupils, including for those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Local Authority's SEND forecasts provide clear evidence that the Local Authority will continue to see an increase in the number of pupils with SEND in the coming years.

1.2 The overall numbers of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) have been rising steeply. In 2023/24, the number of school aged children (aged 4-18) in East Sussex with an EHCP stood at 3,989. Over the next 4 years, the Local Authority forecasts that overall numbers of school-aged children with EHCPs will grow, by around 34%, to stand at approximately 5,400.

1.3 The number of children identified as autistic is growing year on year and is translating into rapidly increasing numbers of EHCPs issued with a primary need classification of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Autism diagnoses will likely continue to be the biggest driver of rising EHCP numbers in the coming years.

1.4 In recent years, the Local Authority has been implementing its strategy to provide SEND places in the county. This includes the development of more specialist facilities in mainstream schools. The Local Authority would like to establish a facility with a designation of ASD at Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School as the latest phase in its strategy. The new facility would accommodate up to 12 pupils with autism and associated needs.

2. Supporting information

Specialist facilities

2.1 Specialist facilities are located within a mainstream school and provide specific support to a limited number of pupils with an EHCP naming a specific primary special educational need. Pupils within the facility are on the roll of the mainstream school and are in addition to the published admission number. The school receives additional funding from

the local authority to support the child. Placements are determined by the local authority and may be drawn from a wider geographical area than the school's usual catchment.

2.2 Specialist facilities promote an ethos of inclusion and help integrate their pupils into the mainstream school for as much of their learning time as their needs allow. Specialist facilities also provide access to a base within the school for more intensive learning and support when required. The expertise of staff within specialist facilities provides significant benefits to the rest of the school and other schools in the local area to support all pupils with a special educational need and create a fully inclusive learning environment.

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

2.4 The school and the Local Authority have identified the former dining room building on the school playground as suitable to accommodate the new facility. Some adaptation work would be required to the building which the Local Authority would fund from its approved capital programme. The Local Authority would work closely with the school to ensure these are completed in time for the facility to open.

Statutory process

2.5 Between 25 April and 23 May 2025, the Local Authority undertook a period of consultation with the Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School community, local schools, and key stakeholders on the proposed changes. The consultation was available on the Local Authority's [consultation hub](#).

2.6 By the close of the consultation period 46 responses had been received. Appendix 1 provides a summary of the consultation responses.

2.7 The Local Authority has considered the reasons given by respondents for not supporting the proposal. In response to the concerns raised:

- The proposal to establish a specialist facility at Chailey St Peter's is part of a broader strategy which is developing specialist facilities in schools across the county, so that pupils in East Sussex can access specialist provision. The expansion of specialist facilities is in line with the government's inclusion agenda. The school will benefit from the expertise of staff that will support all pupils at the school.
- The proposed location of the facility is at the rear of the school site, away from the road. The facility would have its own dedicated building and fenced outside space to keep children safe.

2.8 Full consultation responses are available for Members to view in the Cabinet and Members' Rooms at County Hall.

2.9 In accordance with Section 19 (1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 (the regulations) and following the consultation, the Local Authority is required to publish a statutory proposal to provide interested parties with a further opportunity to comment on or object to the proposal. It is intended that the statutory proposal would be published on the Local Authority's consultation hub and in the local newspaper in July 2025. Publication would trigger a 4-week period of representation during which interested parties could comment on the proposal.

2.10 The Local Authority has a duty to determine the proposal within 2 months of the end of the representation period. It is anticipated that a final decision on the proposal would be taken by the Lead Member at his decision-making meeting in October 2025.

3. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 In conclusion, the Local Authority has a strategy to deliver more specialist facility places in mainstream schools across the county, particularly for the growing number of children with autism. To support its strategy, the Local Authority would like to establish a specialist facility for up to 12 pupils at Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School from 1 January 2026.

3.2 Feedback from the consultation was overwhelmingly positive, with 41 out of 46 respondents (89%) supportive of the proposal. For this reason, the Lead Member is recommended to:

- 1) approve publication of a statutory proposal to establish a specialist facility for up to 12 pupils at Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School; and
- 2) delegate authority to the Director of Children's Services to amend the proposal prior to its publication if required.

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LOCAL MEMBER
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