

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

Date: 6 October 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 establish a new specialist facility at Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Lead Member is recommended to approve the establishment of a new specialist facility for up to 12 pupils at Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School with effect from 1 January 2026.

1. Background

1.1 On the 7 July 2025, the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability (the Lead Member) considered a report on a proposal to establish a new specialist facility at Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School.

1.2 As described in the report, the overall numbers of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) have risen steeply in recent years and are forecast to continue rising. 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.

1.3 In recent years, the Local Authority has been implementing its strategy to provide more SEND school 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.

1.4 The Local Authority consulted on the proposal between 25 April and 23 May 2025. The Local Authority consulted with the school community, local schools, and other key stakeholders. Feedback from the consultation was overwhelmingly positive, with 89% of respondents supportive of the proposal. Having considered feedback from the consultation, the Lead Member approved the publication of a statutory proposal to establish a new specialist facility at the school with effect from 1 January 2026. The [report and minute](#) from 7 July 2025 Lead Member meeting can be viewed on the Local Authority's website.

2. Supporting information

Statutory process

2.1 Proposed changes to the organisation of maintained schools must be in accordance with Section 19 (1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended) and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alternations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 (the regulations). In accordance with these requirements, a statutory proposal was published on the Local Authority's website on 25 July 2025. A statutory notice

was published in the Sussex Express on the same day, providing details to interested parties on how the full proposal could be accessed.

2.2 Publication of the statutory proposal triggered a 4-week period of representation when comments or objections could be made to the Local Authority. By the close of the representation period on 21 August 2025 no comments or objections had been received.

Project delivery and funding

2.3 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 during autumn 2025 in time for the facility to open in January 2026.

Equality Impact Assessment

2.4 The Lead Member is required to have due regard for 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) has been undertaken to identify any equality implications of the proposal and to address any concerns through appropriate mitigations and can be found at Appendix 1. No potential equality barriers were identified by stakeholders during either the initial consultation or the subsequent representation period following the publication of the statutory proposal. The Local Authority believes the proposal would have a positive impact on provision at the school. Specialist staff would work with pupils in the facility and also work with teaching staff across the school to develop skills and expertise in responding to SEND needs and creating an inclusive environment. The Local Authority believes that the facility would be well placed to support children with ASD in the local area.

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 The regulations describe the factors to which the Lead Member should have regard before making a final decision on the proposal. These are set out in Appendix 2 to this report.

3.3 For the reasons set out, the Lead Member is recommended to approve the establishment of a new specialist facility for up to 12 pupils at Chailey St Peter's CE Primary School with effect from 1 January 2026.

CAROLYN FAIR **Director of Children's Services**

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LOCAL MEMBER

Councillor Matthew Milligan – Chailey Division

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability – [7 July 2025 \(agenda item 4\)](#)