

Statutory Notices

Proposal to establish a special
educational needs unit at Thames
Ditton Infant School

November
2024



School Organisation Statutory Notice

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Notice is given in accordance with section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, as amended by the Education Act 2011, that Surrey County Council, is proposing to make a significant change to Thames Ditton Infant School by establishing a unit for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities.

Local Authority Details:

Local Authority	Surrey County Council
Address	Quadrant Court 35 Guildford Road Woking GU22 7QQ

School Details:

Name of School	Thames Ditton Infant School
Category of School	Foundation School
Type of School	Infant school
URN	124968
Address	Speer Road, Thames Ditton, Surrey
Postcode	KT7 0PW

Introduction

This paper outlines a proposal by Surrey County Council, in cooperation with the Governing Body of Thames Ditton Infant School, to establish a unit for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) at Thames Ditton Infant School. There would be 21 places for pupils with autism and/or communication and interaction needs from Reception to Year 2. All pupils would have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The statutory process and timescales for the establishment of the special educational needs unit are detailed below.

Proposal

In agreement with the school's Headteacher and Governing Body, Surrey County Council are proposing to establish a SEN unit at Thames Ditton Infant School with 21 places for pupils with autism and/or communication and interaction needs. Each pupil would have an EHCP specifying the specialist provision within the school as an appropriate placement to meet their individual needs.

Proposed timeline

The proposed establishment of a special educational needs unit would come into effect from September 2025 onwards.

Phase	Date
Statutory notices	04/11/24 – 02/12/24
Lead Cabinet Member Decision	January 2025
Implementation	September 2025

It is proposed that:

1. A new SEN unit would be established to provide a total number of 21 places for autistic pupils and pupils with communication and interaction needs aged 4 to 7 years.

Making Representations, Objections and Comments

2. This is a four-week consultation which starts on Monday 4 November 2024 and concludes on Monday 2 December 2024.
3. Any person can make comments, agree, or object to the proposal by sending representations to the Local Authority through the following channels:

Website	www.surreysays.co.uk
Email	schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk
Post	Katie Kelly-Weller Education Place Planning Surrey County Council Quadrant Court 35 Guildford Road Woking GU22 7QQ

Background

4. Thames Ditton Infant School is a Foundation school. The school is situated in Thames Ditton, within the borough of Elmbridge. The school is rated as “Good” by Ofsted in its last full inspection in April 2022.
5. Thames Ditton Infant School is a three-form entry infant school for pupils aged 4-7 years and will have a published admissions number (PAN) of 60 from September 2025 (thus becoming two-form entry at this time).
6. The school has capacity for 270 children and there is sufficient capacity within the school to accommodate a SEN unit following the reduction of the schools PAN from September 2025.

In September 2024, the school will be opening a nurture class (The Nest) for children with a diagnosis of autism and with social communication needs. "As part of this consultation the proposal is that if the SEN unit is agreed then this class will move to the SEN unit from September 2025

Rationale

Table 1 shows the latest projections for infant pupils with EHCPs in Surrey who have autism and/or have communication and interaction needs identified as their primary need in Elmbridge. The projections show a gradual decrease in this cohort year on year to 2032/33 however the demand still outweighs the level of provision within local schools.

Table 1 Forecasts for children with autism and communication and interaction needs in Elmbridge

Residential Area	School Location	Forecast									
		2023-24	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	2028-29	2029-30	2030-31	2031-32	2032-33
Elmbridge	Surrey	94	80	77	77	77	77	75	74	74	74
	Out of county	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3
	Total SEN Need	96	82	79	79	79	79	79	77	77	77
Total SEN Places Available		24	24	34	44	54	54	54	54	54	54
Shortage or Surplus of Places (No.)		-72	-58	-45	-35	-25	-25	-23	-23	-23	-23
Shortage or Surplus of Places (%)		-299%	-240%	-133%	-80%	-46%	-46%	-43%	-42%	-42%	-42%

The proposed SEN unit at Thames Ditton Infant School would have 21 specialist school places. Should these pupils be required to attend an education provision in the independent sector, costs would equate to around £1.113m per year every year, based on an average unit cost of £53k per pupil per annum for independent sector provision. This is compared to the average cost for state-maintained specialist places at £23k per pupil per annum and equivalent costs for 21 places of £483k. Provision of the additional state-maintained specialist school places would generate an approximate saving of £30k per pupil place per year.

This data clearly shows that sustained use of the independent sector in the future would constitute an inefficient use of limited resources and severely impact Surrey's ability to deliver services and support for children, young people, and families, whilst remaining financially sustainable.

Surrey's ambition for children and young people who have additional needs and disabilities is to develop high quality fit for purpose local state maintained specialist school provision that enables better long term outcomes. This in turn ensures that Surrey resident pupils are educated closer to home, more connected to local communities and local support services, and have increased opportunities to enter employment in the future.

Table 2 shows the current SEN unit provision within mainstream schools in Elmbridge.

Table 2 Current SEN unit provision within primary schools in Elmbridge

School	Designation	Age
Bell Farm Primary School	Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)	4-11 (Years R to 6)
Chandlers Field Primary School	Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN)	4-11 (Years R to 6)
Thames Ditton Junior School	Moderate learning difficulties (MLD)	7-11 (Years 3 to 6)

Key outcomes and benefits

Expanding outstanding sufficient and sustainable specialist school provision for Surrey resident primary age pupils in Elmbridge would provide the following benefits as stated in the [Developing local Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) Provision](#) report to Cabinet on 25 January 2022:

1. Benefits realisation ensures Surrey's maintained specialist education provision is fit for purpose and creates additional employment/supported internship opportunities for residents around areas of expansion.
2. Children, young people, and families can access the same level of high-quality support wherever they live in Surrey. We have a good, shared understanding of our children and young people who have SEND in Surrey and our support offer matches their identified needs.
3. Expanding Surrey's specialist provision aligns with the Preparation for Adulthood programme and strategy for Post-16 to create local further education and employment

pathways such as apprenticeships and supported internships. This enables young people who have SEND to make a successful transition to adulthood and secure employment.

4. Capacity created locally will also make certain that SEND home to school transport distance and costs are reduced so that pupils attend their closest most appropriate school with shorter journey times. Opportunities for developing independent travel skills can be maximised as a result of children and young people being educated closer to home. This will also address local congestion around school sites as well as traffic flow around the county, which will be of benefit to Surrey's Green Agenda.
5. The distribution and occupancy of current Special Schools and SEN Units in mainstream schools clearly illustrates that there is insufficient provision of autism and Communication & Social Interaction Needs, Moderate Learning Difficulties, Severe Learning Difficulties and Social Emotional Mental Health Needs Special places.
6. The approved remodification and expansion programme will ensure that additional places are matched appropriately to need type, phases of education and geographic locations.

An Equality Impact Assessment is being completed throughout the consultation process and will be published as part of the Lead Cabinet Member Decision meeting.

Implementation plan

Finance and resourcing

The school would receive funding per pupil per year for each agreed planned place commissioned. The school would also receive a "top up" sum for each pupil on roll at the SEN unit, appropriate to the needs of individual children.

Year	No. Places	Place Funding (per pupil)	Top-Up (per pupil)	AY Total
1 (AY 24/25)	12	£10,000	£7,517.92	£210,215.04
2 (AY 25/26)	19	£6,000 for previous year's 12 £10,000 for 7 new placements	£7,517.92	£284,840.48

A Surrey maintained special school with experience of setting up new provision would support the school with the start-up of the new SEN unit. This would support the training and ongoing development of the provision over the first academic year.

Staffing

Thames Ditton Infant School has already consulted to reduce the PAN from 90 to 60 from September 2025. The staff are already in place to manage the SEN unit.

The new provision would be run and overseen by a lead teacher/SEND Manager. The class would be supported by Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) and Learning Support Assistants (LSAs).

Capital planning and buildings

Thames Ditton Infant School will have latent classroom capacity as a result of the reduction in PAN from 90 to 60 from September 2025. These classrooms would be utilised for the proposed SEN unit.

Growth model

Thames Ditton Infant School has opened a nurture class called The Nest for September 2024 for autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs. If the SEN unit is agreed then this class will be part of the unit. The growth model is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Growth model for nurture group and SEN unit at Thames Ditton Infant School

	Sep-24	Sep-25	Sep-26	Sep-27
Reception	12	7	2	7
Year 1		12	7	7
Year 2			12	7

	Nurture class
	SEN unit

A nurture class will open with 12 spaces from September 2024, with this class transferring to a SEN unit if approved from September 2025. A new Reception intake would also join the school from September 2025 with 7 spaces in the unit. By September 2026, the SEN unit would have 21 spaces throughout Reception to Year 2. Dependant on need, the spaces may not be split evenly across the year groups.

Consultations, approvals, and overall timescales

1. It is proposed that the changes commence from September 2025. The proposed changes require a period of consultation, the publication of Statutory Notices and the agreement of Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member for Education and Learning if the proposal is to proceed.
2. The first stage of consultation was open from Thursday 12 September 2024 and concluded on Friday 25 October 2024. During this period, Surrey County Council shared its proposal with the wider professional network, schools including headteachers and chairs of governors, with unions, parent representatives, partner agencies and with the staff and parents of the school subject to the proposals. The associated documentation was published on Surrey County Council’s ‘Surrey Says’ website and circulated to local stakeholders. Interested parties were invited to return responses to the consultation via an online form or alternatively by email or post.
3. The consultation analysis is published at www.surreysays.co.uk on the statutory notice webpage alongside this document.

Key points from the consultation responses:

- There were 20 responses to the informal consultation
 - 100% of respondents agreed with the proposal.
 - The most prevalent theme in the comments was the need for more specialist school places in Surrey.
1. Statutory Notice is now open for a four-week period from Monday 4 November 2024 to Monday 2 December 2024. The publication of Notices is when the local authority formally states that it intends to implement the proposed changes. This will be the

final opportunity for consultees to make their views known before a final decision is taken. Following the consultation periods officers will summarise the feedback and will report to the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning.

What happens next?

You can make representations, objections and comments using the online form at www.surreysays.co.uk. Alternatively, you can respond by email or post at the addresses given in the section [Making Representations, Objections and Comments](#).

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