

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET MEMBER FOR ALL AGE LEARNING**

**DATE: 17 JULY 2018**

**LEAD OFFICER: DAVE HILL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING**

**SUBJECT: CHANGING THE AGE RANGE AND INCREASING PUPIL NUMBERS AT WEY HOUSE SCHOOL**



**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Wey House is the only primary special school for social emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) in the Surrey area, currently catering for key stage 2 pupils only. It provides for boys who are unable to manage the school environment successfully without a high level of targeted intervention and support.

The school is located in Bramley which is based in the south west quadrant of Surrey and it caters for approximately 9 pupils per year and it has a 'good' Ofsted rating. The school is usually oversubscribed and there are a significant number of requests for SEMH provision for key stage 1 pupils.

When Wey House School has no places available the alternative option is to place children in the non-maintained and independent (NMI) sector at an average of £48,327 per annum for each pupil placed.

Officers are proposing to extend the age range of Wey House School to incorporate some key stage 1 places and expand pupil numbers in all year groups from the current total of 36 planned places in key stage 2 only to 55 across the primary age range.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for All Age Learning approves the change in age range and increase in pupil numbers at Wey House School, taking into account the outcome of the informal and statutory consultation period.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Demand for specialist provision in the county for pupils with SEMH needs is high. The provision of additional places in a specialist school will help support local families who otherwise have to travel further afield. This will enable a decrease in home to school travel times and cost. Where places are currently unavailable at Wey House, there is demand for placements in the NMI sector at high annual costs.

Some Key Stage 1 places will be on an 'assessment basis' to allow a period of intervention with highly specialist staff for very young pupils exhibiting significant SEMH needs.

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hard to gain. An increased number of pupils will generate increased funding into the school.

## **DETAILS:**

### **Proposal**

1. Officers are proposing to extend the age range of Wey House School to incorporate some key stage 1 assessment places and expand pupil numbers in all year groups.
2. It is proposed that the number of places changes from the current total of 36 planned places in key stage 2 only to 55 across the primary age range.

### **Rationale**

3. Demand for specialist provision in the county for pupils with SEMH needs is high. The provision of additional key stage 1 places in a specialist school will help support local families who otherwise have to travel further afield. This will enable a decrease in home to school travel times and cost. Where places are currently unavailable at Wey House, there is demand for placements in the NMI sector at high annual costs.
4. Once a pupil has been placed in non-maintained and Independent (NMI) provision it is more likely they will remain there for at least the remainder of the key stage and on occasions until the end of their formal education. By offering specialist places at an earlier opportunity young people can be supported through transition periods to continue to access the most appropriate maintained local provision.
5. Some Key Stage 1 places will be on an 'assessment basis' to allow a period of intervention with highly specialist staff for very young pupils exhibiting significant SEMH needs. The aim for this age group will be to promote a return to the mainstream sector where possible. If this is not possible then assessment and identification process during this period will ensure that pupil's needs are being met appropriately and that their continuing primary phase of education can be met at Wey House.
6. The current planned places at the school is a low number for a special school. This can present a challenging financial environment, as economies of scale are hard to gain. An increased number of pupils will generate increased funding into the school. It will provide a greater opportunity to utilise potentially sustainable options to meet the needs of pupils, such as alternative groupings of pupils together or bringing in different types of support arrangements. This will benefit the development of pupils and staff and provide a model of excellence for this cohort.

### **Pupil Placement**

7. There will be no impact on any of the current Wey House pupils who will continue their education in the school until they are ready for secondary transition. New pupils into Key Stage 1 will be allocated places in the school through the EHCP and admissions processes and may be on an 'assessment basis'.

8. Appropriate pupils for this provision would be identified and placed at Wey House using the Education Health Care Plan and subsequent review pathways. The document 'SEND admissions processes for referrals for specialist placement for school age children' describes how this process works and is available on the Surrey Local Offer website.

### **Benefits of the proposal**

9. Demand in the area for provision for pupils with SEMH is high, providing additional key stage 1 places will enable local families to remain closer to their homes and will decrease travel times and distances.
10. There will also be fewer children being placed in more costly NMI settings.
11. Meeting local demand and therefore enabling more pupils to be educated closer to home will provide an improved resident experience.
12. Increasing the numbers of pupils will help ease the challenging financial environment for the school, enabling more efficient staffing and pupil grouping and creating a more sustainable provision. The support available for these pupils will be improved through increased funding and greater economies of scale.

### **CONSULTATION:**

13. A 4 week informal consultation period has taken place, where parents at Wey House School and other stakeholders were provided with a consultation report and the opportunity to attend a public meeting. No parents attended the consultation meeting and there were 2 responses to the consultation, one respondent disagreed with the proposals and one was unsure. The unsure respondent was concerned that increasing pupil numbers would increase class sizes at Wey House. To confirm, the proposal would not bring about increased class sizes.
14. This informal consultation period was followed by a 4 week statutory consultation period. The Statutory Notice period ran from 4 June to noon on 3 July 2018 and generated 3 further responses to the proposal. The responses agreed with the proposal.

### **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

15. One risk of expanding the provision at Wey House would be if there were insufficient pupils to fill the proposed new places. Given the significant demand for LAN places in the county and as additional capital resources are not required to create the additional places, this risk likelihood is considered low and the impact would also be low.

### **Financial and Value for Money Implications**

16. The current cost of maintained special school provision at Wey House is approx £30,000 which consists of £10,000 planned place funding and £20,977 'top up' for each pupil that attends.
17. Due to the increase in places there will be an additional annual cost to ensure that additional speech and language therapy is available to the extra pupils

accessing the school. The additional therapy required equates to an annual cost of around £12,000.

18. Placement costs for primary SEMH pupils in the NMI sector range from £18,000 to £86,000 per annum for each primary aged pupil placed dependent upon the NMI used. The cost of an individual placement significantly differs between providers.
19. It should be noted that in addition to NMI placement fees home to school transport costs may also be higher due to the locations of the schools in relation to pupil home addresses in Surrey.
20. In order to support the creation of additional places for KS1 pupils a full scale building programme is not required. The school site is able to accommodate a 55 places across both KS1 and KS2 from within current capacity. However considerations are currently being given into potential investment into the school to improve the facilities that may require capital investment to enhance and develop additional teaching spaces, create outside learning environment for infant aged pupils and safe spaces around school for 'time out/pace space'. In order to identify potential solutions for developing the site a feasibility study will need to take place. Any proposal to develop a capital scheme to address the capacity aspect for additional pupils will be subject to a business case to be considered by the Council's Investment Panel and Cabinet Member or Cabinet.

#### **Section 151 Officer Commentary**

21. The County Council is currently under significant financial pressure, so recommendations need to demonstrate value for money. The section 151 officer confirms there are additional revenue costs with this proposal, but it will enable SEND pupils to be educated in maintained provision, which is generally more cost effective than an external placement.
22. The service have indicated that capital funding may be required in the future, but at this stage are unsure of the level. Any future capital proposal is subject to a business case being developed for consideration at Investment Panel.

#### **Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer**

23. There is a requirement for consultation in this context as set out in The School Organisation Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools (England) Regulations 2013.
24. Such consultation will need to involve those directly affected by such changes together with relevant representative groups. It will be important that the material presented to consultees provides sufficient information to allow for intelligent consideration and response in relation to the proposals. This information will need to be presented in a way that consultees will understand. The responses to the consultation will need to be conscientiously taken into account when the Cabinet Member makes the decision.
25. Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on the Council to secure that efficient primary and secondary education is available to meet the needs of the population in its area. This includes meeting the special educational needs of pupils where relevant. In doing so, the Council is

required to contribute to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on the Council to secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available in its area. There is a legal duty on the Council therefore to secure the availability of efficient education in its area and sufficient schools to enable this.

**Equalities and Diversity**

- 26. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed, this has identified potential positive impacts and negative impacts on groups with the protected characteristics of age, disability and pregnancy and maternity for school staff.
- 27. In relation to a potential negative impact on pupils identified in the EIA for pupils with a disability that may experience difficulties with change it is proposed that the school outlines a plan to prepare pupils for changes that may happen in the future.
- 28. In relation to a potential negative impact on school staff with pregnancy and maternity rights identified in the EIA it is proposed that the school use 'keeping in touch' sessions to ensure staff are kept apprised of future changes.

**Other Implications:**

- 29. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	No significant implications arising from this report
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	Set out below
Environmental sustainability	Set out below
Public Health	No significant implications arising from this report

**Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications**

- 30. For vulnerable pupils with SEND, the provision of additional places, closer to home, will be beneficial. This may reduce travel time for many families and will also limit the number of school transitions as pupils will be able to stay in a single school throughout the primary phase.

**Environmental sustainability implications**

- 31. The provision of additional SEMH places closer to home for residents with SEND will enable shorter travel distances and therefore a positive impact on environmental sustainability.

## **WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

32. If approved, the change in age range and number of places will take place from September 2018. The school will admit a larger number into key stages 1 and 2 where approved through the usual SEND admissions process, and some assessment places in key stage 1 will start to be available, also through the SEND admissions process from September 2018.

### **Contact Officer:**

Julie Beckett, School Commissioning Officer (SEND), 01483 518109

### **Consulted:**

Cabinet Member for All Age Learning  
Headteacher and Governing Body of Wey House School  
Parents and carers at Wey House School  
Surrey Special Schools  
Liz Mills, Assistant Director, Schools and Learning  
Matt Furniss Local County Councillor  
Local Borough Councillors  
Dioceses  
Unions

### **Annexes:**

Equality Impact Assessment

### **Sources/background papers:**

School Organisation consultation paper  
<https://www.surreysays.co.uk/csf/wey-house-school/>