

School Organisation Consultation

On a proposal to close the Specialist Centre for Speech, Language
and Communication Needs at The Echelford Primary School in
Ashford, Surrey

The Proposal

Surrey County Council, in conjunction with the Governing Body of The Echelford Primary School, is proposing

- To close the specialist (SEN) centre at the school with effect from January 2014.
- To provide suitable alternative education for those pupils currently on the roll of the centre
- To continue to provide specialist places at other centres within mainstream Surrey Schools to meet future needs

The current position at The Echelford Primary School

The SEN Centre was established in 2006 and has accommodation for up to 12 pupils. It caters for the learning needs of pupils with speech, language or communication difficulties within a mainstream primary school setting.

The Echelford Centre is one of 49 Specialist Resource Centres across Surrey covering a range of special educational needs. From time to time the viability of the centres, both collectively and individually, is reviewed in relation to the changing pattern of special needs in the county and the quality of the education being provided.

The demand for places at The Echelford Centre has been inconsistent since it opened in 2008. It nominally has 10 places available but in some years it has operated with a few as 4 students. It has never been full. As of June 2013 only 2 of the 6 children on roll will be Surrey residents, the other 4 children being transported from a London borough that maintains their Statements of SEN.

The recent decline in numbers may only partially be attributed to the changing pattern of special needs in the area for it is apparent that The Echelford Centre also faces a number of other challenges.

The site of the Centre was originally located on the second floor of The Echelford, which is a former secondary school building. It was felt by the staff and former Headteacher that the location of the Centre limited the opportunities of SEN students and consideration was given to re-locating it within the building; for this reason it was recently moved to the first floor to try and improve the integration of students with their mainstream peers. This location is still not ideal.

OFSTED's view of SEN provision within mainstream settings is that this is most successful where pupils 'typically spend some of their time taught by specialist teachers' as well as being taught in a normal mainstream classroom alongside



their peers. This inclusive model for delivering education is the basis of the best practice guidance given to schools maintained by Surrey County Council.

It is probably accurate to say that the popularity of the Centre with parents has been adversely affected by the ongoing concerns regarding the overall quality of the provision at the school. OFSTED inspected The Echelford in November 2012 and identified Serious Weaknesses in the quality of education both in the Centre and in the school more generally. These weaknesses are being addressed by the governors and the senior leadership team and progress is being closely monitored by both Surrey County Council and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Schools (HMI).

Nevertheless since the departure of the Head of Centre the governors have faced particular difficulties in trying to recruit a suitably qualified and experienced teacher to direct and improve the work of the Specialist Centre. Without such a person in post it is difficult to anticipate standards improving for the children accessing the Centre.

What is being proposed

For all of the above reasons the newly appointed Executive Head Teacher and the Governing Body approached Surrey County Council and requested it review the viability of The Echelford Centre. We are considering whether to permanently close it and make better provision for the existing pupils elsewhere. This provision will be made in negotiation with the parents of the individual pupils in the Centre and the maintaining Local Authority, for out of county children. We welcome the views of all parents of children attending the school and the Centre and from other interested parties.

Why are we making these proposals?

It is clear that the numbers of children requiring this type of specialist provision is declining in this part of Surrey. It is also unrealistic to expect the standard of education in the Centre to rapidly improve without the leadership of an appropriately qualified teacher. The County Council believes that it can continue to offer good quality provision for children with speech, language and communication needs in other schools across Surrey as the need arises; this will be available within Spelthorne borough and elsewhere. Therefore the viability of this Centre is questionable.

Have Your Say

We would like to know what the people in the area think about this proposal. There is a consultation form on page 5 of this leaflet.



The consultation opens on **Monday 10 June** and runs for 6 weeks. We are also going to hold a public meeting at the school where you can express your views, obtain more information and have your questions answered. The meetings will be held at:

The Echelford School	on Thursday 13 June	At 5.30 pm
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Please come and share your views. Please also complete the Consultation Response Form on page 5. You can email your views to:
schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk

The Consultation lasts until Monday 22 July

Next Steps

We will analyse the consultation responses and include them in a report to Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Learning. If the case for closure is accepted Statutory Notices will be published in the local press, on the school's website and on the school's gates. There will be a further period of 6 weeks for anyone to comment.

The final decision

The responses to the Statutory Notices are analysed and a report is then prepared for the County Council's Cabinet Member for Children and Learning who will make the final decision on whether or not to close the Specialist Centre at The Echelford School in January 2014.

Consultation Response Form

Proposal to close the Specialist SEN Centre at The Echelford Primary School

Please give us your views. Please tick the box that best shows what you think of the following questions. Also give us any comments you have. You can write on the other side of this sheet if you want more space to write comments.

Do you agree with the proposal to close the SEN Centre at The Echelford from January 2014?

Agree

Don't know

Disagree

Comments:

To help with our analysis of responses please will you tell us something about yourself? Tick the boxes that best apply to you .

A resident of Spelthorne Borough

An resident of another part of Surrey or out of county

A parent/carer of a child attending The Echelford Primary school

A parent/carer of a child attending the SEN Centre

Someone who works at the school

A Governor of the school

Some other link to the school

Someone else with an interest – please give details

Please return by **Monday 22 July 2013** to:

Melanie Harris The Echelford Consultation, Room 326
County Hall, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey KT1 2DN

email: schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk

Please tick if you have written comments on the other side

