

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET MEMBER FOR ALL-AGE LEARNING**

**DATE: 9 MARCH 2021**



**LEAD OFFICER: RACHAEL WARDELL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

**SUBJECT: PROPOSAL TO OPEN A SPEECH LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION NEEDS (SLCN) SPECIALIST CENTRE AT THE ORCHARD SCHOOL**

**ORGANISATION STRATEGY PRIORITY AREA: TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITY**

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

To review the education rationale for the commencement of a specialist centre for pupils with Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) at The Orchard School.

The Orchard School is a three form entry infant school in the borough of Elmbridge in Surrey. The school has an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating. The Orchard School is a Foundation School and is part of The Voice Education Trust.

The Orchard School has been supporting 2 pupils in each year group in an environment mirroring a specialist centre. This proposal is to commission the places permanently to continue to meet the needs of pupils with Speech Language & Communication Needs (SLCN) in the local area.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for All Age Learning determines the statutory notice thereby bringing into effect the formal commencement of a Specialist Centre with 6 places for pupils from Year R to Year 2 with Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Demand for specialist centre provision in the north east area for pupils with Special Educational needs is high. The provision of a specialist Speech Language and Communication (SLCN) centre will help support

local families who would otherwise have to travel further afield. This will not only enable local provision for local children, but also decrease home to school journey times and associated costs.

Pupils attending the centre would be in addition to the mainstream Planned Admission Number (PAN) of the school. The school would manage meaningful inclusion into the mainstream classes which is wholly individualised to the needs of the child. Some pupils would spend more time in the centre than others and it would be the responsibility of the school to manage the specialist offer and inclusion levels in partnership with the parents and LA officers.

The Orchard School is using existing space within the current building to run a temporary centre environment. It is proposed that this space is permanently used for the new provision, therefore there is no capital investment and additional building needed.

For these reasons, it is recommended that the Cabinet Member for All Age Learning determines the Statutory Notice, to bring the creation of the specialist centre into effect from 1 September 2021.

<b>DETAILS:</b>
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1. Demand for specialist centre provision for pupils with special educational needs is high. As a result, other specialist provision is operating at or above capacity. The provision of a specialist SLCN centre in an infant school will help support local families who would otherwise have to travel further afield. This will increase availability of specialist school places that are matched appropriately to need-type, phases of education and geographic location, as well as reduce home to school journey times and associated costs.
2. The Orchard School is a three form entry infant school in the borough of Elmbridge in Surrey. The school has an 'Outstanding' Ofsted rating. The Orchard School has been supporting 2 pupils in each year group in an environment mirroring a specialist centre. This proposal is to commission the places permanently to continue to meet the needs of pupils with Speech Language & Communication Needs (SLCN) in the local area.
3. It is anticipated that the centre would be organised with two places per year group. The Orchard School is using existing space within the current building to run a temporary centre environment. It is proposed that this space is permanently used for the new provision, therefore there is no capital investment and additional building needed.
4. Appropriate pupils for this provision would be identified and placed at this specialist SLCN centre using the Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and subsequent review pathways.

5. There will be 6 places in total from September 2021. There will be 2 places available for pupils joining Year R. There will also be 2 places in year 1 and year 2 which will be filled by pupils moving through the current temporary centre if still identified as the appropriate placement in their EHCP.
6. Creating the specialist places in an Infant School for pupils in Year R, 1 and 2 creates an opportunity for pupils in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 to access specialist teaching and support. It will benefit pupils in need of further assessment and support to prepare to transition to the most appropriate placement in year three depending on needs identified through their Education Health and Care Plan. This may be a local mainstream junior school, another mainstream school with a specialist centre, or a special school.

<b>CONSULTATION:</b>
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7. An informal public consultation ran from 2 November 2020 and the consultation document is available at [www.surreysays.co.uk](http://www.surreysays.co.uk). A public meeting was held online over Microsoft Teams on 18 November 2020, six parent/carers and six members of staff or Governors attended and the views shared at the meeting were supportive of the proposal. A total of 10 responses were received during the consultation period which closed on 14 December 2020. All 10 responses agreed with the proposal.
8. As a result of the informal consultation, a decision was made to proceed with statutory notices which were published from 11 January 2021 to 8 February 2021. The full documents are available at [www.surreysays.co.uk](http://www.surreysays.co.uk) and the long version of the statutory notice is appended to this report as Annex A.
9. There was only one response to the statutory notices and the respondent agreed with the proposal.
10. A consultation analysis is appended to this report as Annex B. 100% of respondents agreed with the proposal. Respondents who left comments mentioned the value in having a specialist provision as part of a mainstream school and the benefit for all pupils in the school. Respondents also mentioned the importance of inclusion and that all mainstream schools should be supported to include pupils with additional needs. One respondent questioned whether there could be a feeder school in year 3.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:**

11. The Orchard School has been supporting pupils with SLCN on a temporary basis and there are no building requirements, therefore the implementation risks are low.
12. There is a need for additional SEN places in Surrey, and the risk is in not creating additional places, with pupils placed in non-maintained independent schools which would be more expensive and further away from home.

## **Financial and value for money implications:**

13. There are no adjustments needed to the building, and therefore there are no capital building costs to this proposal. A sum of £8,000 per key stage classroom would be provided to purchase resources.
14. Each of the six pupils on roll at the specialist centre at the school would receive the usual sum of Average Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) of £3,348 from the schools block. In addition to AWPU each agreed planned place commissioned (six in total) would receive £6,000 to support the specialist nature of the provision. Each pupil in attendance would receive an individual pupil 'top up' sum. For Speech Language and Communication (SLCN) pupils the current sum is £3,517.29. This rate applies to all specialist centres across all Surrey schools which host a centre of this type.
15. Revenue costs from the High Needs Block are shown in the table below. These are in addition to the £3,348 per pupil AWPU payments:

<b>6 Place Centre total at current rates</b>	
6 planned places at £6,000 ongoing	£36,000
6 places of top up at £3,517.29 ongoing	£21,103
<b>Total funding per financial year</b>	<b>£57,103</b>

16. The ongoing revenue costs in the table above are already being incurred by the Council and funded from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, as part of supporting the temporary places at The Orchard so creating a permanent centre would not increase costs in that respect. The £8,000 per key stage classroom would be a one-off payment which would come from the Dedicated Schools Grant High Needs Block in line with current practice.

**Section 151 Officer commentary:**

17. Although significant progress has been made over the last twelve months to improve the Council's financial position, the medium-term financial outlook beyond 2021/22 remains uncertain. The public health crisis has resulted in increased costs which may not be fully funded. With uncertainty about the ongoing impact of this and no clarity on the extent to which both central and local funding sources might be affected in the medium term, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports the proposal to permanently create this specialist centre which will overcome the need to purchase specialist placements elsewhere. The implications will be factored into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

**Legal implications – Monitoring Officer:**

18. 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 (including special educational needs) of the population in its area. 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.

19. The local authority has carried out a consultation on the proposal which is in accordance with statutory requirements. Such consultation involved those directly affected by the changes together with relevant representative groups.

20. In considering this Report, Cabinet must give due regard to the results of the consultation as set out in the reports attached and the response of the Service to the consultation comments and conscientiously take these matters into account when making its final decision.

**Equalities and diversity:**

21. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is attached to this report as Annex C.

**Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications:**

22. This proposal would provide increased provision for primary places for children with Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) which

would be of benefit to the community served by the school. This means it would therefore also be of benefit to any Looked After Children who have an Education Health and Care Plan identifying their Speech and Language and Communication Needs.

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

23. Safeguarding vulnerable children is a high priority in all Surrey schools. Schools have considerable expertise in safeguarding vulnerable children and adhere to robust procedures. The schools will continue to apply good practise in the area of safeguarding as they are currently. In addition, safeguarding is a key area for monitoring when Ofsted carries out inspections.

**Environmental sustainability implications:**

24. The specialist centre is within the existing building of the school.

**WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:**

25. Subject to the Cabinet Member determining the statutory notices Surrey County Council and The Governing Body of The Orchard will proceed with transition from a temporary centre to the opening of a permanent centre in September 2021.

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**Contact Officer:**

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**Consulted:**

Carol Rusby, Headteacher, The Orchard School  
Parents of children attending The Orchard School  
Staff members at The Orchard School  
Governing Body The Orchard School  
The Voice Education Trust  
Residents  
Cllr Peter Szanto  
Cllr Julie Iles

**Annexes:**

Annex A Statutory notice (Full)  
Annex B Consultation Analysis  
Annex C Equality Impact Assessment