

**Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet**

**22 May 2019**

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**Alyssa Lenton-Jinks – Statement regarding agenda item 6  
Specials Schools Consultation**

**To Councillor Laura Mayes – Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills**

**Statement**

Wiltshire Council and Cabinet Members,

I stand before you as a young voice, being 17 years old, and as a sister to a SEND child attending St Nicholas school, to ask you to consider what is truly best for the children that you are aiming to serve. I am able to understand what you have claimed you are trying to achieve with this new “superschool”, but it is clear that the main aim cannot be fulfilled through this school: to serve the children who fight every day for their acceptance. As a student studying psychology and sociology, I learn every day about the impact of psychological harm not only on individuals but on society as a whole, and I believe I am able to safely say that the harm caused by this “superschool” will completely outweigh the benefits. These SEND children already face stigmatisation in their everyday lives, being labelled “abnormal” or even “retarded”, yet by moving them to an institution outside of community reach, Wiltshire Council only appears to accept these labels, which will be further integrated into society’s view on SEND children. In a time where mental health is at the forefront of recent news and events, surely Wiltshire Council will not want to be perceived as not caring about the mental health of some of the most vulnerable children in our community? By attending a school near St Nicholas, I am able to see first hand how more young people are learning to understand how amazing these SEND children are by seeing them in their local community. I ask you, do you want to return to a period of time where SEND children were hated and hunted by society, simply due to a lack of understanding? If they are once again hidden away, surely the progression that society has made will start to be reversed? The government statistic as of January 2018 for the percentage of pupils accessing SEN support was 11.7% of the total learning population, and that number has only been rising- so do you want society to once again neglect and belittle the children that are a growing part of our future? I am no politician, but even I can see that there are already three established schools that with sufficient funding, which you are already stating will go towards the so-called “superschool”, can only further grow and become the excellent schools that they have always aimed to be. Not only would the psychological damage that the children will not doubt experience be saved, but they will be able to remain as part of

our growing community. I leave you with the question: do you value the lives of these children, who are our future, enough to see them as more than just pounds saved on a sheet of paper?