

Update on progress – Special schools in Wiltshire

Purpose of the Report

1. To update School's Forum on the proposals going forward for special schools in Wiltshire.

Main Considerations

On 22 May 2019, Wiltshire Cabinet agreed the vision for the future of special education in Wiltshire. This included the proposal for a single school to be created and to bring together Larkrise, St Nicholas and Rowdeford schools under one school management and build new facilities on the Rowdeford site. It was also agreed to consult on bringing all onto the one site in Rowdeford in the future.



The proposal came after more than three years working with special schools, officers, parent/carers, WPC, multi-agency partners and councillors. Having analysed the proposals, Wiltshire Councils believe this is the best way to meet the need to:

Sufficiency

- ✓ Provide 100 extra places for children/young people with complex needs
- ✓ Reduce overcrowding
- ✓ Limit the number of children/young people who need to be placed in expensive out of county independent schools

Value for money

- ✓ Use public money wisely to reduce revenue overspend in the High Needs Budget
- ✓ Use a significant sum of capital (£32m)
- ✓ Focus the funding on staff rather than travel and additional buildings for specialist services vital to children and young people with SEND (e.g. Physio, Speech and Language and Paediatricians)

Quality

- ✓ Improve the quality and suitability of buildings (based on DfE guidance, two of our current schools are significantly overcrowded)
- ✓ Develop Ofsted rated "outstanding" SEND provision
- ✓ Increase access to health support in the schools
- ✓ Reduce the number of children travelling over an hour to school
- ✓ Improve choice and scope of education for all pupils
- ✓ Provide more resource base places in local schools under the umbrella of the expertise in special schools. (Resource bases are particularly liked by families; we have 271 places now and will be increasing this by a further 46)

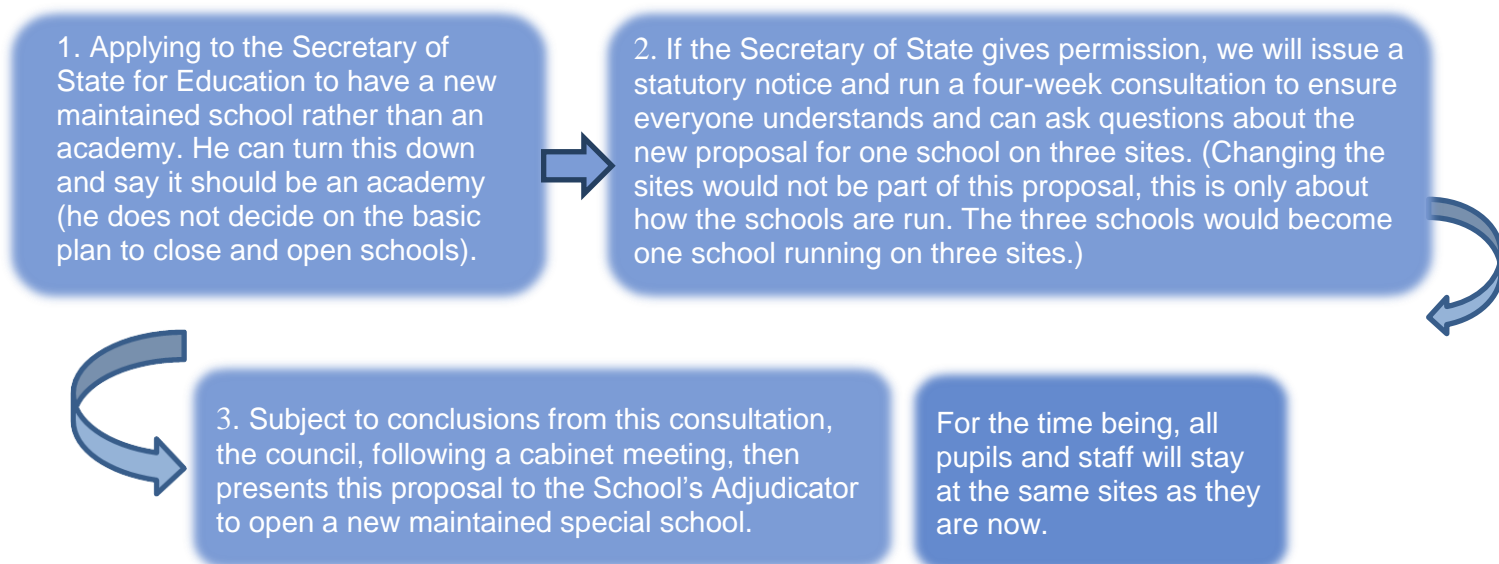
Outcomes

- ✓ Invest in better outreach, training and coordination as Key Stage 4 results and progress remain below national averages
- ✓ Prepare young people for adulthood

On the 22 May Cabinet:

1. Approved establishing a new maintained special school, with a single leadership team as soon as possible and no later than 1 September 2021. This involves closing St Nicholas, Rowdeford and Larkrise schools and opening them as one new school on three sites.
2. Approved expanding places on the Rowdeford site to accommodate up to 400 pupils as part of the new special school by September 2023. This will include primary, secondary and post 16.
3. Approved that St Nicholas and Larkrise stay in use and do not close until the new provision is ready, and it is appropriate for children to transition to the new site at Rowdeford.

There are some technical processes to achieve this, which include:



While this is happening Wiltshire Council will take forward a parallel programme of work to develop Post 16 special education and transition to independent living coordinated through the new school and SEND team.

The timescale for the creation of the one maintained school on three sites will be dependent on how quickly the Secretary of State is able to look at our application. If quick, we could complete the statutory consultation before the summer holidays in July. If he needs the average six weeks to decide, we will consult in September 2019. This would mean a Cabinet decision in September or October before going to the School's Adjudicator.

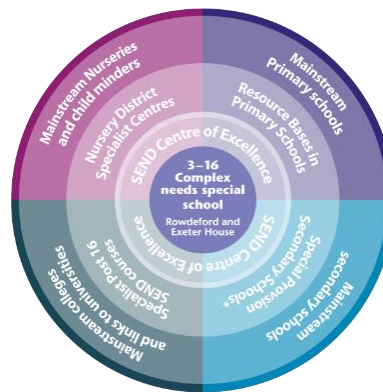
Once the new buildings at Rowdeford are ready for pupils, Wiltshire Council will consult on whether to keep all three sites open or whether only the Rowdeford site will be needed. There is no fixed date for this.

The Cabinet decisions particularly stressed three important commitments that:

- Road safety will be particularly looked at for the planning for the new build at the Rowdeford site
- Pupils starting to use the new buildings will be sensitively and carefully supported
- All these changes to special schools will be part of the wider review of SEND, with particular regard to the investment and relationship with mainstream schools, resource bases in primary schools and Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP) in secondary schools

Importantly, the aim is not just to create extra places, but create a new approach for the future which:

- Creates a new way of meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND, offering an integrated model of education, health and care, not just for pupils who attend special school, but for all 3,500 children/young people with an EHCP
- Provides outreach to mainstream schools and the opportunity for children to be dual registered with the special and a mainstream school to develop more inclusive education for all



It is hoped that this will:

- Support a new school coming together under one senior leadership team to be instrumental in creating the centre or system of excellence, outreach and contribute to the wider plan
- Enable children to stay in the existing school buildings until new provision is built and ensure smooth transition if the sites at St Nicholas and Larkrise are not needed in the future
- Enable building work to start as soon as possible and this can be done in sections so that potentially children could start being in the school buildings when each stage is built e.g. by school key stages

You can read the full report and the minutes on the link below and watch the webcast of the meeting where the decision was made by following the links on the Wiltshire Council website.

<https://cms.wiltshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=141&MId=12498&Ver=4>

Once Wiltshire Council has heard from the Secretary of State, we will share more information about timings, consultation options and how you can get involved. Please also look on the WPCC website where information will also be posted.

<https://www.wiltshireparentcarercouncil.co.uk/>

While developing the plans in the north we have also been considering provision in the south. This includes planning for more resource base places (46 across Wiltshire), 20 new places for children and young people with complex needs at Exeter House Special school by 2020 and rapidly expanding a satellite of Springfields Academy to create 32 new places this autumn for children and young people with ASD and social emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). This is being supported through capital funding made available by the DfE over a three year period. The consultation for this has been available during May on the SEND Local Offer and on RightChoice. However, the major development will be a new Academy funded by the DfE (Circa £12m) following a successful application in the last freeschool bidding round for special schools. This will create a new school for 150 children/young people with ASD/SEMH in the south of the county. Initial meetings have begun with the DfE which will lead to a preferred sponsor academy being appointed in the autumn. Sponsor academies can go to the Wiltshire Local offer website to consider applying to become the preferred provider academy. It is hoped that the new school will be ready for pupils at the latest in 2023, but potentially as early as 2021.

Proposals

2. For Schools' Forum to note the commitments made in the proposals being taken forward by Wiltshire Council.

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