

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS AND SOUTH WILTSHIRE RECOVERY
Cllr Pauline Church

EDUCATION AND SKILLS

OFFICER CONTACT: Leanne Field, 01225 713551, leanne.field@wiltshire.gov.uk

REFERENCE: CS-02-19

PROPOSAL TO INCREASE DOWNLAND SCHOOL CAPACITY

Purpose of Report

To approve the Council to make a prescribed alteration to Downland School by expanding the school's current net capacity from 69 places to 90 from September 2019.

Consultation

As per the guidance laid out in line with Department of Education's publication "Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools" (October 2018) a consultation period was undertaken between the 18th July 2019 until 21 September 2019 (see appendix A). As per the DfE guidance this document and resulting delegated decision is drawn from to the information and discussions that were exchanged in this time period. Information was made available to key stakeholders regarding the proposals and the background behind these proposals. Stakeholders were encouraged to respond by filling in a consultation reply form which was made available, by post and email, and via the Wiltshire Council and school website.

In addition, two meetings were held with parent carers (pre-consultation and formal consultation), as well two meetings for governors and staff (pre-consultation and formal consultation). Acting Lead Commissioner for SEND, Leanne Field, led on all four meetings.

In total 12 members of staff, zero governors and one parent carer attended the meetings.

There were six written responses to the consultation, two of which "Do not give consent for response to be included in any publicly accessible document produced by the council as part of the work undertaken to develop special school provision"

There were very few areas of conversation during the consultation meetings (please see appendix B) – and both staff and the parent who attended were positive about the proposed changes. Key areas of discussion:

Carers and Parents	Response
1) I know there is a significant demand for special school places	1) Wiltshire Council is aware of the significant demand for specialist

is 90 enough	provision and has strategic plans in place to address these needs. This includes the development of the Centre Of Excellence in the north of the county offering 400 special school places, as well as a new free school in the south of the county, offering 150 special school places
--------------	---

Staff and Governors	Response
1) Why hasn't the consultation been carried out before now 2) Are we likely to see numbers increase again in the future 3) Will there be a decrease of planned places in the future	1) The consultation was put on hold whilst Downland explored the option of academisation 2) There is currently significant demand for specialist provision and this is unlikely to decrease in the near future. The local authority has strategic plans in place to address future demands and needs. This includes the development of the Centre Of Excellence in the north of the county offering 400 special school places, as well as a new free school in the south of the county, offering 150 special school places. Downlands is very much seen as a part of wider plans in helping demand being met 3) Reassurances around what would happen if the school had to decrease planned places - if they were an academy they can sell off these places across the country. Also, there could be an opportunity to open as an Alternative Provision as a plan B.

Written Feedback

- 1) The written replies were on the whole also very positive

There were six written responses to the consultation, two of which "Do not give consent for response to be included in any publicly accessible document produced by the council as part of the work undertaken to develop special school provision"

As such of the four response we are able to use in this document, 75% (3) of the responses were in were in agreement with the proposal with 25% (1) being “not sure”. Responses included that from a parent carer as well as from other interested parties (including residents, and other schools).

Comments from written responses included:

- “There needs in fact to be a greater increase, to need the needs of Wiltshire families”
- “I agree providing class sizes are not increased”
- “I think this is a great idea as we desperately need more provision within the county”
- “Spaces for students with EHCP and additional needs which exceeds the capacity of mainstream and alternative provision are extremely limited in the county”

Throughout the whole process there were no responses from governors at the school.

The Local Authorities response

None of the issues raised by the parents, pupils or staff are unexpected. Therefore the decision to increase places should be made with a firm commitment to:

- Regularly review places at the school in partnership with the senior management team

Keep the school and all stakeholders up-to-date on strategic SEND developments affecting the county

Options Considered

The Council has the option to do nothing, however by not increasing capacity this would not meet the needs of Wiltshire’s Children with SEND because there is a current lack of provision in this area, and demand for places at Downland School.

Reason for Decision

The Council anticipate an additional 661 EHCPs will be needed in Wiltshire by 2026. Of these children and young people, 220 are likely to need a special school place. A current lack of provision in the south requires 71 ASD & SEMH special school pupils to travel from south to north. This research has led to a pre-consultation with Downland School.

DECISION MADE

I approve the increase in the number of planned places at Downland School from 69 places to 90 as set out in the report.

This decision was published on 11 October 2019 and will come into effect on 21 October 2019

The following report and appendices are attached:

Downland Consultation Document (Appendix A)

Notes from consultation events (Appendix B)

Written submissions given with consent (Appendix C)

The following supporting documents are available from the officer named above:

None

.....SIGNED.....

Cllr Pauline Church

Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills and South Wiltshire Recovery

Date:.....11 October 2019.....