

CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, EDUCATION AND SKILLS - CLLR LAURA MAYES

OPERATIONAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES

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REFERENCE: CS-03-18

**PROPOSAL TO EXPAND THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
DESIGNATION FOR PUPILS AT ROWDEFORD SPECIAL SCHOOL,
ROWDE, WILTSHIRE**

Purpose of Report

To determine the proposed expansion of the Special Educational Needs designation for pupils at Rowdeford Special School, Rowde, Wiltshire to include severe learning difficulties (SLD).

Consultation

As a part of the [cabinet decisions](#) made on the 7th of November 2017 regarding the development of special schools it was agreed that consultation should go forward to consider expanding the SEN designation of Rowdeford special school to include severe learning disability (SLD). As per the guidance within the Department of Education's publication "School Organisation – Maintained schools" (April 2016) a four week consultation period was undertaken between the 22nd of January 2018 and the 16th of February 2018. The consultation documentation was made available to key stakeholders. Stakeholders were encouraged to respond by filling in a consultation reply form, by post, email and via the Wiltshire Council and Local Offer Websites .

In addition, meetings were held with parents, governors, staff, pupils and interested parties. The SEN Lead Commissioner and the Head teacher led the meetings with staff, governors and parents. The school led the consultation with the pupils.

17 staff and governors and 8 parents/carers attended the meetings.

There were 11 written replies to the consultation, of these 2 were from parent/carers of young people at the school, 2 were from parents of children with SEND attending other non-Wiltshire Special schools, 4 were from members of staff, 1 was from a governor and 2 were from head teachers from Wiltshire Primary schools. Of the 11 responses 7 were in favour, 1 comprised a number of queries and 3 proposed the need to look at the wider implications and were not in favour unless looked at in the wider context. Two of these last responses were from parents who do not currently have children in Wiltshire Specials Schools.

As per the DfE guidance this document and this resulting delegated decision are drawn from the information and discussions that were exchanged through the above process. Key areas of discussion and comment:

Carers and Parents	Response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The key concern was around pupils who might formerly have been accepted at Rowdeford, who may now be encouraged to consider a mainstream school. Parent/carers wanted reassurance that additional training and support would be given to mainstream schools to ensure the support to vulnerable young people was enhanced. 2) In addition, there was some concern that Rowdeford staff would also need additional training to meet the needs of pupils with SLD. 3) This change should not be seen in isolation, the Council should look at this alongside developing all special schools. The suggestion was made that there should be an executive head over the MLD/SLD schools, similar to Three Ways. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) There is a parallel piece of work being taken forward to support and guide secondary schools as they take on pupils with higher levels of need, particularly around vulnerability in the large secondary school system. 2) Larkrise school have offered to support Rowdeford school in increasing levels of training and confidence around young people with SLD 3) Rowdeford senior leadership have offered to help create a support package of training and awareness raising for mainstream secondary schools. 4) Virgin care have offered to support the change through collaborative training. 5) The Special schools project is considering the wider development needs of specialist provision.

Pupils	Response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The pupils were very positive. The young people welcomed the changes and made key suggestions for how the school could be adapted to welcome pupils with higher needs e.g. more sensory room space. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) We have thanked the young people for their input and the school will be building some of the suggestions into their implementation plan.

Staff and Governors	Response
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The main concern raised by staff was that they felt that places needed to be increased at the same time. They appreciated the support for upskilling around SLD and wanted reassurance that there wouldn't be a sudden leap in pupils with SLD. 2) There was also some concern that there would be a need for additional equipment/resource 3) However, they largely saw it as a positive step forward for the school. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) There will be an implementation plan written up by the school looking at all aspects of training and support and how classes will be configured in the future to meet need. 2) Banding will be higher for young people with SLD and this should support the need for additional resource. 3) In the consultation session, we were able to reassure the staff that we didn't anticipate a huge surge in young people with SLD and we would be trying to create cohesive and incremental growth while also looking at the broader implications.

Written Feedback

In addition to the consultation responses and replies there were 2 emails with questions requesting clarification on details in the consultation documents and parents wanting to better understand how the changes would impact on their particular child's education. These types of questions were shared with the school/commissioning team and individual responses were given.

The Local Authority's response

In response, the local Authority would like to thank all those who participated in face to face or written consultation. These face to face sessions were engaging and helpful in looking at not only this immediate decision, but also the wider issues for special schools. Having considered all the responses and considerations raised, the Local Authority believes it is appropriate to expand the SEN designation for Rowdeford School to include SLD from the 1st of June 2018 for implementation at the start of the summer term 6. As encouraged by those involved in the consultation, the school will be supported to develop the necessary skills and expertise to meet the higher level needs of pupils with Severe Learning Disabilities and the school will write an implementation plan to adjust to the change. There will also be on-going work with mainstream schools to support more vulnerable young people with lower levels of MLD who might formerly have been considered for Rowdeford school.

The wider issues raised will be taken up through the Special Schools project and it was encouraging to have positive feedback from parent carers about the need to see this change in the light of these wider considerations.

Options Considered

- To continue the existing SEN designations for the School and for other Wiltshire Special Schools to expand their designations or increase numbers. This has been rejected as there is limited space on the other schools' sites to expand (Larkrise and St Nicholas), the schools are not in the right locality for pupils in the north east and west of the County (Exeter House) and, while extending SEN designation to SLD is a graded progression for Rowdeford school, it would be a significant change for the other two schools in the local area (Springfield and Downland). In addition, this would not meet the need to ensure that the high level expertise at Rowdeford school is focused on those children/young people with higher levels of SEN.
- To expand the Special Educational Needs designation for pupils at Rowdeford Special School, to include SLD. (This proposal)
- Wider options are also being prepared through the Special Schools project which will complement the proposal made here, addressing the County wide issues around location, expansion and other matters pertaining to special school provision across Wiltshire.

Reason for Decision

The feedback has been reviewed and it has been considered it is the right decision for children and young people in Wiltshire with SEN to expand the Special Educational

Needs designation for pupils at Rowdeford Special School, Rowde, Wiltshire to include pupils with severe learning disabilities (SLD).

This decision would come into effect from the start of term in June 2018 with a process of training, development and planning to enable pupils with SLD to attend Rowdeford Special School.

<p><u>DECISION MADE</u></p> <p>Following consultation and representation, I have made the decision set out in the attached report for Rowdeford Special School to expand the Special Educational Needs designation for pupils at Rowdeford Special School, Rowde, Wiltshire to include pupils with severe learning disabilities (SLD). This will become effective from 1st of June 2018 and implemented in the start of the term in June 2018.</p> <p>This decision was published on 25 April 2018 and will come into force on 3 May 2018.</p>
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The following supporting documents are attached:

CS-03-18 Report

Date:17 April 2018.....

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Cllr Laura Mayes
Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills