

## **Wiltshire Council**

**Cabinet  
15 May 2018**

**Children's Select Committee  
19 June 2018**

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### **Interim Report of the SEND School Provision Task Group**

#### **Purpose of the report**

1. To present the findings and recommendations of the task group to Cabinet for consideration alongside the Cabinet Member's/Corporate Director's report on Special School Provision at the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2018 Cabinet meeting.
2. To present the Interim Report of the SEND School Provision Task Group for retrospective endorsement by the Children's Select Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

#### **Background**

3. At the 5th September Children's Select Meeting members were provided with an overview of the work undertaken regarding securing appropriate and adequate special school provision for children and young people in Wiltshire. The committee was informed that a joint steering group, supported by a specialist SEN consultant, had been established. The work of this group had concluded and produced a report referred to as "The Wood Report" which detailed the findings and consultants' recommendations. The committee resolved at the end of discussion to establish a task group to look at the plans for the future provision of SEND schools and school places in Wiltshire.

#### **Terms of reference**

4. The following terms of reference for the task group were endorsed by the Children's Select Committee on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017:
  - 1) To consider the future provision of SEND education for Wiltshire's children and young people in the context of the challenges outlined in the "Wood Report"/WASSPP report (May 2017).
  - 2) To receive evidence from:
    - a. Wiltshire Council officers;
    - b. Wiltshire schools;
    - c. Parents/guardians of children with SEND.

## Membership

5. The task group comprised the following membership:

Cllr Jon Hubbard (Chairman)  
Cllr James Sheppard  
Mr John Hawkins (Children's Select Committee Teacher Representative)  
Ms Jen Jones (Wiltshire College Representative)

Cllr Anna Cuthbert (until 4<sup>th</sup> January 2018)

## Methodology

6. The task group received evidence from the following witnesses:

### Wiltshire Council witnesses:

Cllr Laura Mayes	Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Cllr Jane Davies	Portfolio Holder for Disabled Children and Adults
Terence Herbert	Corporate Director, Children and Education
Alan Stubbersfield	Interim Director, Education and Skills
Susan Tanner	Head of Commissioning and Joint Planning
Judith Westcott	Lead Commissioner, SEN
Mike Dawson	Asset Manager, Estates and Asset Use

### External witnesses:

Stuart Hall	Director, Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC)
Matthew Sambrook	Head Teacher, Exeter House School
Phil Cook	Head Teacher, Larkrise School
Rosalyn Way	Head Teacher, St Nicholas' School
Aileen Bates	Chair of Governors, St Nicholas' School
Mike Loveridge	Head Teacher, Rowdeford School
Terri Chard	Deputy Head Teacher, Rowdeford School
George Keily-Theobald	Head Teacher, Downland School
Paul Cooke	Chair of Governors, Downland School
Chris Wiltshire	Vice Chair of Governors, Downland School
Jon Hamp	Head Teacher, Springfields Academy
Mike Thomas	Deputy Head Teacher, Springfields Academy
Nicola Whitcombe	Lead SENCO, Springfields Academy
Sarah Busby	Executive Head Teacher, Magna Learning Partnership

7. The following written evidence was received by the task group:

- Wiltshire Special Schools Development Considerations 2017
  - o Wiltshire Council Addendum to WASSP Report
  - o WISSC Addendum to WASSP Report
  - o WASSP Report (the Wood Report)

- Combined Special Schools Proposal to Wiltshire Council: “Meeting the Challenges for Re-shaping Specialist Education Provision across Wiltshire’s Specialist Schools and Academies”
- Expression of Interest to Wiltshire Council: “Satellite extension of SEND special primary and secondary school provision for children and young people with autism and/or social emotional and mental health needs”
- Special Educational Needs in Wiltshire: Response to Proposals from Wiltshire Council (Reach South, Springfields Academy)
- Special School Provision Task Group Briefing (4<sup>th</sup> January 2018)
- WPCC Parent Engagement Sessions – Overview
- WPCC Parent Engagement Sessions – Notes
- Wiltshire Council Estates Summary and Reports
- WISSC Response to LA Proposal
- SEND Schools Financial Positions (Larkrise; Downland; St Nicholas; Rowdeford)
- Figheldean Estates Information – Wiltshire Council
- Draft Version of Special School Provision in Wiltshire Cabinet Report

8. The task group performed visits to all six of the SEND schools in Wiltshire. The task group also attended a WPCC public meeting to discuss the provision of SEND schools with parent carers.

9. The task group met 15 times, as demonstrated in the following table:

Date of meetings	Item / topic	Details
<b>2017</b>		
9 <sup>th</sup> October	Scoping meeting	Members received the Wood Report and the Wiltshire Council draft Position Statement. Draft terms of reference were agreed.
<b>2018</b>		
4 <sup>th</sup> January	SEND School Provision Briefing	Task group was provided with background information on the Special School provision project, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Relevant contextual information;</li> <li>- Information about current special school provision;</li> <li>- Current challenges &amp; issues;</li> <li>- Project Objectives</li> </ul>
12 <sup>th</sup> January	Meeting with Stuart Hall (WPCC)	Members met with Stuart Hall, Director of the WPCC, to receive information from their public forum events arranged to discuss the future of SEND School provision in Wiltshire with parent carers.
26 <sup>th</sup> January	Exeter House & Larkrise School	Members performed an evidence gathering visit to Exeter House and Larkrise School.
29 <sup>th</sup> January	St. Nicolas’ & Rowdeford School	Members performed an evidence gathering visit to St Nicholas’ and Rowdeford School.

<b>Date of meetings</b>	<b>Item / topic</b>	<b>Details</b>
2 <sup>nd</sup> February	Downland School & WPCC SEND Information Event	Members performed an evidence gathering visit to Downland School.  Members also attended a WPCC SEND Information event to meet with Wiltshire Parent Carers.
9 <sup>th</sup> February	Data meeting with officers	Members received information from officers on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The process of considering the special school proposals;</li> <li>- resource bases; banding structures; current out of county spend</li> </ul>
19 <sup>th</sup> February	Springfields Academy	Members performed an evidence gathering visit to Springfields Academy.
23 <sup>rd</sup> February	Combined SEND School Proposal	The task group received a briefing on the contents of the Combined Special Schools Proposal at Downland School
28 <sup>th</sup> February	Wiltshire Council Response to SEND Proposals	Members were briefed by officers on the responses from Wiltshire Council to the proposals put forward by SEND schools.
26 <sup>th</sup> March/ 3 <sup>rd</sup> April	Report Meetings	Members considered the content of their task group report.
20 <sup>th</sup> April	Report Meeting	Members considered the first draft of their task group report.
23 <sup>rd</sup> April	Meeting with Sarah Busby	The task group held conference call with Sarah Busby, Magna Learning Partnership
27 <sup>th</sup> April	Sarum Academy Visit	The task group visited Sarum Academy.
27 <sup>th</sup> April	Meeting with LA SEND Schools	The task group met with representatives of the 4 LA SEND schools to discuss their initial conclusions and findings
4 <sup>th</sup> May	Final Report Draft Meeting	

10. The task group discussed their findings directly with representatives of the 4 LA maintained SEND schools. The draft of this report was shared with Springfields and Exeter House along with Wiltshire Council officers for comment.

## **Evidence**

### Visits to Wiltshire's SEND Schools and Meeting with Sarah Busby, Magna Learning Partnership

11. Between the 26<sup>th</sup> January and 19<sup>th</sup> February 2018 the task group visited each of the 6 SEND schools in Wiltshire to hear their perspectives regarding the current situation regarding the provision of SEND education in the county. The same questions were posed to each of the schools to provide consistency in the lines of enquiry.

12. There are currently 6 special schools in Wiltshire, 4 of which are local authority maintained (maintained SEND schools):

Larkrise, Trowbridge (LA maintained)  
Downland, Devizes (LA maintained)  
St Nicholas, Chippenham (LA maintained)  
Rowdeford, Rowde (LA maintained)  
Exeter House, Salisbury (Somerset Road Education Trust)  
Springfields, Calne (Reach South)

13. Included in this section are the overarching themes from the interviews, along with information received from the task group's meeting with Sarah Busby, Magna Learning Partnership. The responses from across the interviews are grouped together into the following themes:

14. The current and future state of SEND educational provision in Wiltshire

- a. There is an increasing demand in the county for more complex SEND needs provision, including severe learning difficulties (SLD) and limited growth in social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH). In part, this has been fuelled by the improvement of survival rates and quality of life provision available for children with SLD/PMLD.
- b. The current and future population growth in Wiltshire from the army rebasing/ Military Civil Integration Project (MCIP) will bring an increase in children with SEND into the area. Also producing an increase in demand are the housing growth projects across the county, principally those in Chippenham, Trowbridge, and Salisbury.
- c. The task group noted that the SEND schools had been vocal about a growth in numbers of children with SEND for a while. In January 2016 Wiltshire Council began a process of planning, which subsequently resulted in the commissioning of the Wood Report. It was noted that now that this growth has been identified by the council the best course of action was to swiftly and effectively deal with the issue.

15. Resource Bases

- a. Concern was raised over a "system of escalation" process in the referring of children with SEND from mainstream schools to SEND schools. This meant that the process makes it near impossible for a child to return to mainstream school once they had been referred to from one to an SEND school. In the rare instances where a child had re-entered a mainstream school, these were considered by SEND schools as successes. It was felt by some interviewed that, if appropriate for the child, returns to mainstream should be promoted as a positive outcome as they can provide better community integration. They noted that more flexibility and better processes were required to allow for this to become easier.

- b. All schools interviewed had children on roll whom they felt could be educated within a mainstream school environment, or at a resource base located at a mainstream school.
- c. Education within a resource base at a mainstream school provided benefits such as better social integration for both those with SEND and improved awareness of SEND for those without.
- d. It was felt that a lack of adequate training to equip staff at resource bases to the skill levels required to deal with the needs of SEND children was an issue, and related to the number of children referred to SEND schools from mainstream resource bases. Knowledge and expertise needed to be developed to tackle this.
- e. The maintained SEND schools were open to the potential of managing a resource base on a mainstream school site, both primary and secondary where students at these sites could be on roll at the managing SEND school. It was noted that this method could help as one key part of the overall solution, but would not provide a complete solution.
- f. The transition from primary to secondary education was a key issue for SEND education provision. Early intervention was needed to ensure that this is properly dealt with. SEND resource bases located on secondary schools would help prevent children with SEND who can be educated in a mainstream environment from unnecessarily being moved into SEND schools, and missing out on the social integration opportunities that mainstream can provide.
- g. There is general sense that the existence of league tables for mainstream schools creates a hurdle where, whilst schools are still welcoming, from an overall strategic viewpoint, SEND children can be perceived as detrimental to a mainstream school's league table position. However, the task group were informed that mainstream secondary schools are focused on measuring progress, not attainment. This means that the school is judged on the value it adds to a child. As such, wider inclusion of SEND students being taught well could potentially contribute positively to a school's league table position. However, it was also noted that students who start at a higher point can make greater levels of progress than those who start at a lower point.
- h. It was noted that Head Teachers at mainstream schools had a duty to act in the best interest in their pupils and school. The current environment for accepting SEND children back into mainstream schools meant that it could be detrimental to the school as a whole. Establishing resources bases managed by SEND schools in mainstream schools would avoid this situation and increase SEND children returning to mainstream education when appropriate.

## 16. Geographical Provision

- a. Concerns were raised regarding the potential for a new single site SEND “super-school” which would cater for all SEND designations. Concerns included that the school would very quickly fill with SEND children who could be educated in mainstream schools and, rather than providing a futureproof model of provision for children with complex SEND, they would again end up being educated out of county.
- b. The lack of provision in the south was noted. One joint proposal from the SEND schools recommended the use of the Sarum Academy site in Salisbury to address this. A proposal was also submitted by Springfields with Reach South Academy Trust to Wiltshire Council.
- c. A need for more flexibility was expressed across the schools, as the variety and location of needs across the county could change within a short period of time.
- d. The geographic provision issue was explained as not being quite as simple as a north/south divide. Transport issues across the SEND schools were mapped within the Wood Report and showed that the divide was not as simple as running straight across county from east to west.

## 17. SEND School Proposals

- a. A proposal put forward by Downland School; Exeter House; Larkrise School; Rowdeford School; St Nicholas School; Excalibur Academies Trust; Magna Learning Partnership; Salisbury Plain Academies; and Sarsen Multi Academy Trust (MAT) recommended the formation of a “Wiltshire Special School Collaboration Partnership” (WSSCP). The WSSCP would aim to provide more flexibility and collaboration between the SEND schools and their provision through MAT-to-MAT working.
- b. Springfields school was included in the WSSCP for completeness, they participated in writing WSSCP version 1. It was noted however that Springfields had submitted their own response with Reach South Academy Trust to Wiltshire Council focusing on SEMH and ASD and not SEND across Wiltshire and other designations.

## 18. Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP's)

- a. The task group noted there was contrasting input from the Special Schools and the Local Authority regarding the EHCP process.

### SEND Schools

- b. A widely noted problem from the SEND schools regarding EHCP's were instances of children entering SEND schools on bandings lower than that which accurately reflected the levels of their need. This meant that they were not receiving the appropriate levels of funding required. Examples

included receiving a child who was funded at a band two, who in fact required the needs of a band three or four.

- c. SEND schools asserted that the large proportion of EHCP's received by the schools were of an unacceptably poor quality, with a majority being inadequate. They argued that this meant that the plans often did not deliver the depth of information which should be provided.
- d. It was queried if there were enough staff available to spend the required time and care on each individual EHCP, which could potentially mean a lack of quality control in place. It was also noted that moderation meetings had ceased since the new bandings were introduced and that the bandings could now only be altered at annual reviews, or by the school compiling a case to return to the LA's SEND panel.

### Wiltshire Council

- e. It should be noted that the task group were made aware of a recent Ofsted inspection which had taken place and noted the following extract from their report regarding the EHCP process:

“The quality of some older EHC plans is variable. In the past, these were not always consistently tailored to precisely meet the individual needs of children and young people. In addition, these plans did not always include precise information about education, health and social care requirements. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the targets set out in the most recent EHC plans are more specifically tailored to the needs of the children and young people. This is as a result of the commitment of the SEND Service to regularly review and audit quality through a multi-agency approach and reflect on feedback from parent carers.”<sup>1</sup>

- f. Officers explained that EHCPs are regularly audited. For the last financial year 58% of EHCPs were rated as good or outstanding and 2% rated as inadequate. Parental feedback (scored out of 10) received its lowest score as 6 and a score of 10 received on just below 50% of total feedback.
- g. The task group heard that in addition to annual reviews Education Officers are able to agree uplifts to banding outside of the normal process where agreed as essential. Wiltshire currently has over 3000 plans and in the year to date 40 have been re-banded. Extrapolating this would mean that 120 plans (or 4%) are re-banded in any year, including reactions to children whose needs have changed.

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<sup>1</sup> Ofsted, LA SEND Report: “Joint local area SEN and/or disabilities inspection in Wiltshire”, <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/local-authorities/wiltshire>



## 19. General Comments

- a. Also referenced was the need for an overall strategic view regarding the provision of SEND education which looked at creating a flexible, futureproof system, rather than simply meeting the new impending demand.
- b. Transport costs both across and out of county were a huge drain on financial resources. Whilst it was noted there may be some instances of SEND children benefiting from long transit times to and from school, this did not apply to the majority. This was noted as also applying to transport methods which carried multiple SEND children, such as minivans.
- c. Access to outside educational green space or “forest schools” and Duke of Edinburgh in SEND schools were noted as valuable resources for the development of confidence and self-esteem and are a resource valued by parents and carers.

### Wiltshire Parent Carer Council (WPCC)

20. The task group received the following information and evidence from a meeting with Stuart Hall, Director of the WPCC and through meeting parent carers at a WPCC parent carer event.
21. Feedback was presented from three public forum events for parent carers arranged by the WPCC to discuss the future of SEND provision. A member of the task group attended one of the three events. Parent carers in attendance expressed worries regarding a lack of communication surrounding the process. They also felt there wasn't the required depth of knowledge for each child's individual needs, which led to early failings. A lack of appropriate places available across the SEND provision in Wiltshire was also listed as a key concern.
22. It was noted at the events that a number of parents were home-educating to avoid sending their children out of county. This was worrying as it required one parent to potentially give up their work, placing greater financial pressure on families.
23. It was also noted parents felt that children with SEND were not considered “attractive” by mainstream schools. This was largely due to the “league table mentality”. Better provision in mainstream resource bases was wanted to help provide more effective early intervention and support. Mainstream provision was considered important to ensure that children with SEND could integrate socially within their local communities, rather than being funnelled into SEND schools.
24. The current system of transport to SEND schools was considered problematic by parent carers. It was explained that there was no true consensus over whether long journeys to and from SEND schools were beneficial to children with SEND.

25. Regarding EHCPs, parents felt that lead professionals in many cases did not know the child well enough to properly understand the levels of their support needs. It was also noted that EHCPs were often not well written, with health needs not always being considered.
26. Solutions parents wanted to see implemented included the following:
  - a. Better residential provision;
  - b. A rethinking of the geographical provision in Wiltshire;
  - c. A more flexible provision to better cater for the variety and quantity of SEND needs in Wiltshire;
  - d. A culture change regarding SEND in mainstream schools;
  - e. Greater transparency from the council regarding the limitations and financial barriers.

### SEND School Proposals and Expressions of Interest

27. The task group received a detailed briefing on the SEND proposals and their subsequent expression of interest. The expression of interest from the proposed WSSCP included a focus on resource bases as a part of their solution.
28. The proposal recommended the creation of a WSSCP which would work through a MAT-to-MAT partnership between the SEND schools.
29. The WSSCP model aimed to provide: improved community integration; partnership working between all Wiltshire SEND schools and their MATs; improved processes for the appropriate placement of SEND children by removing drawn out processes of moving children around multiple schools before they are suitably placed.
30. The proposal included three options in relation to a site on Ashton Street, Trowbridge. The options recommended the site either be refurbished or fitted with a new build. The preferred option in the proposal included a series of minimal internal developments to the Larkrise estate and the refurbishment of the Ashton Street Centre.
31. Proposed options for Downland included the conversion of an empty school building, empty classrooms and empty residential units to create additional teaching space. It also referenced potential for open spaces and additional classrooms.
32. Options for St Nicholas School included a new 2-storey module build to the front/side of school which was proposed to include additional classrooms, a staffroom and admin space. Also included was the development of existing space and resources.
33. Future growth demands for Rowdeford were proposed to be met through additional play area space, two new classrooms and creating additional space for break/lunchtime facilities. Delivery for the classrooms was proposed through

a number of potential options: a new build, modular classrooms or the replacement of existing single-storey classrooms with two-storey classrooms.

34. For Exeter House, a reworking of internal structures across the two sites and exploring the opportunities of the Vocational Centre were proposed to provide additional capacity.
35. The proposal noted that Springfield academy has considerable green space and a number of buildings that could be converted to enable increased capacity.
36. Information regarding the financial positions of four SEND schools involved in the WSSCP proposal were provided for the task group. The information provided demonstrated that none of the four schools were in financial deficit. It was acknowledged that, over recent years and during short term financial challenges, there had been agreed short term deficits with a clear recovery plans agreed with local authority accounting and budget support. To date the short-term deficit plans had been met.

#### Wiltshire Council

37. Wiltshire Council is legally responsible for the commissioning and securing of the right educational provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND. They are also responsible for identifying, assessing and meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND.
38. As at July 2017, 777 children (aged 5-16 years) in Wiltshire were attending a special school. A total of 538 were in Wiltshire-based schools and 239 were in either an out of area local authority special school (143), or an independent special school (96).
39. It was predicted that at least an additional 220 special school places for pupils aged between 5-16 years (31 by 2019; 111 by 2022) will be required by 2026 on top of the 588 places. Of these, 123 were identified for the North of the county, and 97 for the South.
40. On 25<sup>th</sup> April 2018 a delegated decision to expand the Special Educational Needs designation for pupils at Rowdeford Special School, to include SLD was published by the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills.
41. The time period to submit a bid for a free school grant had now passed and there were no further dates set for a new round of free school grants, or any guarantee that a new opportunity would come around again.
42. The SEND school proposals included the recommended option to create a split site between Larkrise school and the site on Ashton Street. Information from the council's Estates Team noted that the DfE recommended minimum area for a SEND school with a proposed capacity of 128 was 3618sqm for the building, and 1.69ha for the site. The site on Ashton street was measured at 1.24ha with

a building area of 1727sqm. Larkrise school site was measured at 0.87ha, with the building as 1666sqm.

43. The combined site area of 2.11ha could potentially accommodate 229 pupils. However, it would also necessitate the provision of an additional 2,094sqm of accommodation (5487sqm total) to meet the guidance on minimum recommended building area for this capacity. This increase in overall capacity was explained as reflecting that there would be no duplication of non-teaching areas such as offices and staff rooms. The guidance does provide reference to split sites, but the close-proximity meant that no adjustments would be required.
44. Officers expressed support to the use of resource bases to address the SEND provision. Some secondary schools use Enhanced Learning Provision (ELP), which receives the same funding as physical resource bases, to deliver provision. ELPs are not always delivered in dedicated physical spaces.
45. It was also noted that Wiltshire Council had expressed support for the potential to establish mainstream resource bases which were managed by SEND schools.

#### Interim Site on High Street, Figcheldean, Salisbury

46. The task group noted the need to provide SEMH and ASD provision in the south of the county, as currently the only provision available is from Springfields (designation ASD) and Downland (designated SEMH with high number of ASD students).
47. A site on St Michael's C of E Primary School site, Figcheldean, Salisbury, had been identified by Wiltshire Council as an interim site to provide additional provision in the south of the county. Interim was explained as being as short-term as feasibly possible. Informal visits to the site were performed by two members of the task group. The site is currently an operational primary school (with 75 children on roll) scheduled for closure at the end of the 2017/18 academic year.
48. The Figcheldean site specifications are a current building area measuring 452.81sqm and site area measuring 0.29ha. These are significantly below the recommended minimum base areas: 1,050sqm and 1.15ha, before the inclusion of additional spaces per pupil. The PAN for the site would be 32, with provision for children aged up to 13 years.
49. A total of £3633 of immediate work had been identified for action on the Figcheldean site and building. a Property Condition Survey had been commissioned which identified the works required for the next 5 years at a total estimated cost of £80,722. To ensure compliance with the Equality Act 2010 £57,131 would need to be spent. However, the interim nature of the site was noted as avoiding the sum of these costs in addition to the immediate work.
50. The expression of interest from the SEND schools responded to the council's proposed use of the Figcheldean site. The Figcheldean site was described in the

document as inadequate due to poor and unsuitable conditions. In response it counter-proposed the creation of a resource base model at an alternative site on Sarum Academy, Salisbury.

51. The Figheldean site was deemed in the expression of interest to be unsuitable due to several identified concerns, these included: structural issues reported in a 2015 survey; its proximity to a military testing zone; the location of the site in a small village without public transport.
52. Sarum Academy was proposed as an alternative option in the form of a resource base aligned to the MAT model. Empty space within the school was recommended for use, and reference was made to Sarum Academy's potential for future PAN increase. It was also suggested that the site includes the potential for physical expansion.
53. The task group visited Sarum Academy and viewed the currently unused Sixth form block. Members were informed that the building could hold 115 6<sup>th</sup> form students. It was anticipated that the building would not be needed for use by the academy for a minimum of 5 years. The building itself was a modern build which was approximately 5 years old, there was outdoor space available which the school noted could be easily fenced off. Out in front of the building was an easily accessible drop off point for the block and there was separate parking nearby.

## **Conclusions**

54. The task group notes that throughout its work so far it has encountered an understandably great deal of emotive responses to the future provision of SEND education. Along with this it has also noticed that there appears to be a serious issue in the form of an apparent disconnect in communication between Wiltshire Council and some of the SEND schools. The task group feels that if work is to be continued in the best interest of the county's children with SEND, this disconnect needs to be mended as soon as possible. To achieve the best outcome all relevant parties need to believe that they are all working together in openness towards the same goal.
55. The proposals received by the task group from the council have been noted as not addressing the ASD/SEMH demand in the south of the county, and the task group noted this with concern.

## **SEND School Proposal**

56. The task group were extremely mindful of the importance of children with SEND being educated within a community to allow for their integration into society, rather than their isolation from it. This opinion was echoed by the SEND schools, and the task group felt that any decisions taken in the future of SEND educational provision should take this into serious consideration.

57. Concerns were raised regarding potential unintended consequences from any changes in access to the current SEND schools. Some had community facilities available within their grounds, such as hydro-pools and woodland and outdoor space. These facilities were made available to the public during certain times and changes in access to them risked removing access to these valued community facilities altogether. Unintended consequences such as these should be taken into account and protection or adequate alternate provision should be sought.
58. The creation of one single SEND “super-school” raised concerns within the task group. Of these concerns one was that currently clinicians visit SEND schools and are a resource accessed by parents. However, under a single “super-school” location this may make access highly challenging for a large number of parents who live large distances from the school.
59. Following the comprehensive briefing on the logistics of the WSSCP the task group, whilst recognising the potential benefits through collaborative working, considered that the model may face challenges in collaborative working if the schools under the WSSCP joined different MATs. There was a lack of certainty over how much control Head Teachers would retain under this context and the ultimate power over any decisions may be held at the MAT level. This would create difficulties if a SEND Head Teacher wished to make a collaborative decision that went against the preference of their MAT.
60. The task group welcomed the ambitions of the WSSCP, but had some reservations regarding the practicalities and note that this is an untested model.
61. The task group felt that with the above taken into consideration that there could be potential for long-term sustainable collaborative benefits from the creation of a MAT which encompassed all 4 remaining local authority maintained SEND schools.
62. Support was given by the task group for the creation of a single SEND MAT for the 4 maintained SEND schools. This MAT could establish collaborative partnerships with the mainstream MATs within each locality, focusing on SEND managed resource bases. This collaborative partnership would allow effective discussion around the placement of children into SEND schools, and also from SEND schools back into mainstream provision when possible.
63. It was noted that this effectiveness may be softened as 2 of the SEND schools have joined separate MATs. However, there is potential for the maintained SEND schools to work towards forming their own MAT which overarches one school spread across multiple sites.

#### Resource Bases

64. Where possible, retaining education in a mainstream environment was considered an important part of promoting positive social integration for SEND children. Therefore, the creation of SEND school-managed resource bases

located within mainstream primary and secondary schools should be implemented.

65. Previous issues noted from a number of sources cited a lack of appropriate training for staff in some resource bases, which were sending SEND children into education at SEND schools and away from mainstream education. The opinion from the task group's meetings at SEND schools was that this meant that they had children on roll who should be mainstream educated. Returning these children to mainstream education was regarded as challenging or even impossible. To address this issue, it is important that those teachers and staff are provided with the appropriate training.
66. An option to establish resource bases at mainstream primary and secondary schools whilst the management remains with an SEND School as Outreach Resource Bases is proposed by the task group. Through this method they would present themselves as more attractive options to mainstream schools and would help ensure adequate assistance and training is provided to staff. The task group feel that this option should be seriously considered.
67. There was a lack in clarity on mainstream schools accepting SEND students and their impact on league tables. The task group heard that schools are now measured based on progress and as such SEND children would not necessarily negatively affect league table positions. However, it was also heard that league tables provided an obstruction to SEND mainstream education, and it was also noted that students who start at a higher point make greater levels of progress than those who start at a lower point. Either way, the task group felt that the above conclusion regarding SEND managed resource bases should be seriously considered.

#### Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs)

68. A pattern of issues was raised regarding EHCP's regarding their quality and the accuracy of their banding outcomes. Sources felt that their quality was often inadequate or even unusable and that children were sometimes referred under a lower banding than they should be which resulted in a lack of appropriate funding.
69. The current process for the creation of EHCPs was considered to have scope for improvement. It was heard from multiple sources that there was not enough or no contact with the child, that the final reports were of erratic quality, and that banding outcomes were sometimes believed to be below what was appropriate for the child. The task group however did note the feedback from Ofsted in their recent inspection regarding EHCPs and the evidence provided by Wiltshire Council officers.
70. Better communication and access to the information already available was needed. This could be done through improved collaboration with the SEND schools. Any change in the EHCP process also needed to maintain independence when producing the EHCP report.

71. The task group concluded that in the light of the evidence and patterns of opinion received that there needs to be a review of the EHCP process. The review needs to cover the EHCP at each of the various stages and include the Systems Thinking team and all professionals involved in the process with an aim of ensuring the EHCPs are age and stage appropriate.

Wiltshire Council Response to Proposal from SEND Schools

72. The following is the DfE’s guidance on the areas required for SEND and alternative provision. It recommends the following minimum areas for special schools for ambulant pupils:

<b>Element</b>	<b>Recommended Minimum Area</b>
Building:	Base Area: 1,050sqm plus 14.5sqm per pupil.
Site:	Base Area: 1.15ha plus 42sqm per pupil.

73. For the interim site at Figheldean, the current building area (452.81sqm) and site area (0.29ha) are both significantly below the recommended minimum base areas before including any additional space required per pupil. As such, the school does not comply with the above guidelines.

74. It was agreed that there is a lack of SEMH and ASD provision available in the south of the county. However, the task group disagrees with the interim use of the site in Figheldean. Clarity is sought on why the options for the use of the site at Ashton Street and Sarum Academy have been discounted based on space issues when the interim provision at the Figheldean does not meet the minimum requirements from the DfE. Concerns were also expressed regarding the site at Figheldean relying on mobile-based classrooms and a general lack of green space.

75. The task group is significantly concerned and confused regarding why Wiltshire Council is concerned by the current state of SEND schools when it has recommended interim use of a site which is below the specifications of any existing SEND schools.

76. Sarum Academy as an option provides adequate potential for it to be seriously considered as an interim provision site. It was noted that there are sections of the school which were empty. The location of the school also provided an appropriate geographic choice to address the need for provision in the south of the county.

Current State of SEND Schools

77. It is important when considering the future of SEND education, such as this, to ensure that the present excellence and skills within SEND institutions are retained under any future plans.



78. The task group commends the workforces across all the SEND schools in the county for providing an excellent quality of education to their pupils and students over many years; especially through consistently meeting this level of provision whilst under pressure from a number of challenges.

#### Larkrise School

79. When visiting Larkrise school the task group noted that it was operating within a 25-year-old temporary structure currently holding more than double the number of pupils it was originally built for. Storage space within the school has been utilised to create additional teaching space and, consequently, equipment (such as wheelchairs and walking frames) have to be stored in hallways. It was also noted that there is restricted access to level playing areas, and that there is no physical space to expand and meet demand.
80. The task group noted that the staff at the school were providing excellent quality of education despite pressures presented through a number of challenges, including the school's site size and quality of the facilities, green space and the expectations from parents and carers on these. However, it was noted that these expectations were a frequent cause of school appeals from parents/carers.
81. The task group's preferred option regarding the future of Larkrise school is for any new or additional provision to the site to remain located within Trowbridge. This would maintain the current locality and allow for any new, more suitable sites to continue to operate within the local area.

#### Rowdeford School

82. Rowdeford is based out of a Grade II listed building with extensive outdoor space available. The outdoor space is utilised in a variety of means for children on roll to interact with including gardens and raising of animals.
83. The task group noted through discussions that, due to its listed status, upkeep and future modifications to the main building may be a potential challenge.
84. The task group noted the main building is primarily used for office space and ground floor ICT access, and that other buildings on the site were more modern, in good repair and allow complete access to all students.

#### Downland School

85. Downland School is the only designated SEMH Special School in Wiltshire, previously with only boys on roll, but has begun to educate both boys and girls.
86. The task group noted during their visit that the school currently has an empty school building, 2 primary classrooms and a mothballed first floor residential area in need of refurbishment, there would also need to be a refurbishment before any use to utilise the empty house. The rest of the estate was noted as being in good working order with a strong team of dedicated staff.

### St Nicholas' School

87. The school is located on a purpose built SEND school established approximately 20 years ago. During their visit the task group noted that there was an extremely limited amount of room for physical expansion to the school as the school was currently operating up to the physical limitations of the site.
88. The task group were informed of the school's desire to adapt an existing conservatory to the side of the school, which was currently used for storage, into a 2-storey module and to develop outdoor space.

### Exeter House School

89. Exeter House is situated across 2 sites within Salisbury. The task group visited the main purpose built special school for ages 4-16. The second site is the recently developed Exeter House Vocational Centre located in Salisbury city centre and caters for learners aged 15 to 19.

### Springfields School

90. During the task group's visit members noted Springfield's two residential houses which cater for 25 pupils and are supported by staff from a care team Monday to Friday.
91. Also located on site was a two-storey house utilised as a resource centre. The task group noted the high quality of the classrooms and resources located within a spacious, modern two-storey building.

### 6<sup>th</sup> Form Provision

92. Currently several of the SEND schools are running 6<sup>th</sup> form provision from their sites. The task group unanimously felt that evidence indicated that this was filling up places in the schools which should be occupied by primary-age children with SEND, and that provision should be sought elsewhere to provide 6<sup>th</sup> form education in more age-appropriate locations, such as Wiltshire College.

### Wiltshire Council Position

93. During their evidence gathering the task group had been made aware of a suggestion to create a mixed-designation "super-school" in order to meet the SEND education demand in the north of the county. This was met with serious reservations by the task group. The task group felt that this sort of option would not represent a solution that best meets the needs of young people with SEND.
94. The mixed-designation nature of any SEND school presented a number of concerns for the task group. Under this young people would be educated outside of their local communities increasing the isolation they experience and the risk of "institutionalisation" from remaining in the same provision from ages 5-19. More cognitively able learners, who may not necessarily perceive

themselves as having SEND, may find attending a school with complex SEND peers challenging. Also, young people with PMLD may feel unsettled or anxious if in a learning environment with young people with significant SEMH difficulties.

95. Transport concerns were a principal concern raised both by parent carers and SEND schools. Whilst it was noted that some SEND children benefited from long journeys, overall there was no firm consensus. Evidence was presented to the task group from council officers stating that a minibus could save money transporting children from the same locality to the “super-school”, however the task group notes that previously evidence has been presented that this was not considered an adequate mode of transport for SEND children, and is therefore concerned that this financial saving may not be deliverable.
96. The single-site option also raised concerns regarding parents and carers accessing the site for various reasons including, but not limited to: short-notice meetings with teachers and other professionals, or emergencies; picking up or dropping off children; school events and access to on-site facilities.
97. An early version of the Special Schools Provision in Wiltshire Cabinet report was received by the task group in draft. It was noted that the report focused on difficulties in complex needs provision in the north of the county, and that no reference was made to Figheldean in the report.
98. Whilst mindful of challenges with the estate located on the current 3 sites, the task group has considered a range of options available from single-site to maintaining all 3 sites. Whilst maintaining current provision in localities would be the ideal solution, the task group recognises there are benefits to be recognised from a new build site alongside a refurbishment of the Trowbridge sites including utilising the site at Ashton street. As such the task group supported an option where provision was spread over a new build site located in or near a strategic location, along with maintaining provision in Trowbridge across a split-site.
99. The task group felt that capital investment for the future options of SEND provision needed to be underwritten by Cabinet as soon as possible in the interest of avoiding any future delays or issues and the continued expense of funding lost tribunals because of challenges with existing provision. Investment as soon as possible would provide the earliest possible pay-off.

#### Further considerations

100. Future discussions between Wiltshire Council and the SEND schools needs to be open, honest, and transparent between both sides to ensure that the best outcomes are reached for the futures of SEND children in Wiltshire. Mindsets should not be blinkered when considering the options available.
101. Given the importance of the above, it is concluded by the task group that in order to ensure that all involved parties are working openly towards a single vision that a working group should be established by Wiltshire Council comprising of SEND school representatives, the WPCC, Wiltshire College,

other relevant service providers, and Wiltshire Council officers to develop further any proposals during the informal and formal consultation periods.

## **Proposal**

102. That the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and Members of Cabinet consider the following recommendations from the task group when considering the report on Special School Provision:

## **Recommendations**

**That the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:**

- 1. Produces a strategy document outlining the future provision of SEND education provision roadmap across the whole of Wiltshire, detailing the vision of what service will be in 10 years' time. This strategy should clearly define how this vision will be accomplished and detail all the interim stages to achieve it, including timelines.**
- 2. Supports the task group's conclusion that, whilst accepting there are significant challenges in trying to maintain the current three schools in the north of the county with MLD/SLD/PMLD designations (Larkrise, Rowdeford and St Nicholas), it would not be appropriate to combine all three schools into one site. Should the decision be made to consolidate the number of sites, provision should be retained in each of the strategic towns in the county, i.e. Trowbridge, Chippenham and Salisbury, therefore ensuring adequate MLD/SLD/PMLD designation provision across the county.**
- 3. Retains Downland School to provide ASD/SEMH and Springfield to provide ASD provision in the north of the county and produce firm proposals for the medium and long-term provision of ASD and SEMH in the south of the county.**
- 4. Avoid the use of mixed-designation schools in the future of Wiltshire SEND School provision that include ASD/SEMH and MLD/SLD/PMLD.**
- 5. Support the task group's conclusion that the remaining 4 local authority maintained SEND schools should consider forming their own MAT and form partnerships with other schools across the county.**
- 6. Investigates the possibility of working with the existing schools and/or any local MAT to explore the benefits of combining the schools together to create a one school multi-site solution.**
- 7. Works with the special schools to strengthen and develop the provision of resources bases particularly looking at how these could be further developed in the secondary sector. Special Schools should be actively encouraged to provide "best practice" support and advice to those mainstream schools running resource bases.**

- 8. Consider the possibility of Special Schools running and managing some of new resource bases in areas where there is no appetite from the local mainstream schools to provide such a resource.**
  - 9. Give serious consideration to utilising suitable post-16 provision for SEND learners across the four sites maintained by Wiltshire College, with additional support from outside bodies where needed.<sup>2</sup>**
  - 10. Implement a Systems Thinking review of the identification, associated assessment, Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and referral processes to cover each of the various stages and include all professionals involved in the process with an aim of ensuring that EHCPs are age and stage appropriate.**
  - 11. Supports the formation of a working group established by Wiltshire Council to develop single vision and aspiration for the delivery of SEND education provision across the county comprising of SEND school and academy representatives, the WPC, Wiltshire College, other relevant service providers, and Wiltshire Council officers.**
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### **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Wiltshire Council Glossary of Terms

### **Background documents**

None

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<sup>2</sup> The task group would like to acknowledge that this recommendation was reached by all members of the task group, one of whom is in the employment of Wiltshire College. This was a conclusion reached unanimously after taking into consideration all the evidence received by the task group.

## Appendix 1 - Glossary

<i>Academy school</i>	Non-maintained (ie by LAs) schools funded directly by the Department of Education through the Education and Skills Funding Agency. Some academies have chosen to become academies, others have had this decision made for them by the DfE if they became inadequate within an Ofsted judgement. The Regional Schools Commissioner has oversight of their performance and standards. Academies are given greater powers than <i>maintained schools</i> to decide how to operate and govern their school.
<i>ASD</i>	Autistic spectrum disorder(s). Autistic Spectrum Disorder (sometimes called Asperger’s Syndrome for high-functioning pupils) normally includes an assessment of <u>persistent difficulties with social communication and social interaction</u> and <u>restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviours, activities or interests</u> since early childhood, to the extent that these “ <u>limit and impair everyday functioning</u> ”. Autistic Spectrum Disorder is a range of symptoms which can vary greatly from person to person. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is also often seen as being part of the spectrum with behaviors around hyperactivity, inattentiveness and impulsiveness.
<i>CIL</i>	Community Infrastructure Levy
<i>Complex (need)</i>	Should be taken to mean children who cannot access a subject based curriculum, this includes children with SLD, PMLD, and more severe MLD.
<i>DfE</i>	Department for Education
<i>DSG</i>	Dedicated Schools Grant – earmarked funding for schools currently channelled through local authorities and subject to strict regulation
<i>Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)</i>	An EHCP details the education, health and care support that is provided to a child or young person with SEN or a disability. It is a legal plan and replaces statements as required by the Children and Families Act 2014.
<i>ESFA</i>	Education and Skills Funding Agency
<i>Free School</i>	All new schools are set up as free schools: they have a similar legal framework as an academy once they are operational. They can be set up by groups of parents, individuals, independent and academy schools. The Local authority can also commission a free school through the “presumption” route.
<i>HNB</i>	High Needs Block (of DSG funding: one of four blocks – HNB; Early Years; Central; Schools)
<i>Independent school</i>	A school that is not maintained by a local authority and is registered under section 464 of the Education Act 1996. Section 347 of the Act sets out the conditions under which an independent

	school may be approved by the Secretary of State as being suitable for the admission of children with EHC plans.
<i>KS</i>	Key Stage (of education). KS 1 & 2 are primary; KS 3 & 4 are secondary
<i>Maintained school</i>	A school that is funded and controlled by a local education authority subject to statutory delegation to school leaders. There are four types of maintained schools: Community school, voluntary controlled school, voluntary aided schools and foundation schools. They are all maintained schools, but there are slightly different legal arrangements as to how they should be governed and how decisions should be made.
<i>MLD</i>	Moderate Learning Disabilities. The general level of academic attainment of these learners will be significantly lower than that of their peers, they will have difficulty acquiring literacy and numeracy skills. Other difficulties may include associated speech and language delay, low self-esteem, low levels of concentration and underdeveloped social skills. Pupils with MLD are typically educated in mainstream schools
<i>MSI</i>	Multiple Sensory Disorder refers to a range of sensory difficulties; this may include hearing impairments (HI), visual impairments (VI) or other hyper sensitivities in the sensory spectrum. Some children/young people may have sensory sensitivities which are more commonly seen as part of ASD.
<i>Multi Academy Trust (MAT)</i>	A group of academies that come together under a strategic and legally binding collaboration.
<i>PD</i>	Physical Disability (PD) includes cerebral palsy, spina bifida, hydrocephalus and muscular dystrophy or any condition which places significant physical limitations on a child/young person. This is separate from any diagnosis of learning disabilities, so many pupils with PD can access a mainstream curriculum.
<i>Place funding</i>	For Special Schools core/ place funding is allocated at a value of £10,000 per planned place. Planned place numbers are agreed between the LA and the school (maintained schools) and with the ESFA for academies. Core funding for the places is allocated regardless of whether places are filled or vacant. However, if places are unfilled year on year the expectation is that place numbers would be reviewed.
<i>PMLD</i>	Learners with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) have complex learning needs. In addition to their severe learning difficulties, they may have other significant difficulties, such as physical disabilities, sensory impairment or a severe medical condition.
<i>Pupil allocation number (PAN)</i>	Pupil allocation number refers to the places in a school agreed with the DfE.

<i>Schools Forum</i>	<p>The Schools Forum is a statutory body which the Local Authority (Wiltshire Council) is required to consult on the following functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation on School Funding Formula</li> <li>Consultation on Contracts</li> <li>Consultation on Financial Issues</li> </ul> <p>The majority of forum members are schools members, with some other related members (Early Years, Diocese etc).</p>
<i>SEMH</i>	<p>Social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) is an overarching term where children/young people have difficulties with emotional regulation and/or social interaction and/or are experiencing mental health problems. These could manifest as difficulties such as problems of mood (anxiety or depression), problems of conduct (oppositional problems and more severe conduct problems including aggression), self-harming, substance abuse, eating disorders, physical symptoms that are medically unexplained or significant mental health conditions such as schizophrenia.</p>
<i>SEN(D)</i>	<p>Special education needs and/or disability.</p>
<i>SLCD/N</i>	<p>Speech, language and communication difficulties/needs (SLCN) is an umbrella term. Children with SLCN may have difficulty with only one speech, language or communication skill, or with several. Children may have difficulties with listening and understanding or with talking or both, this is often, but not always associated with other areas of SEN such as ASD, M/SLD, PMLD or PD.</p>
<i>SLD</i>	<p>Severe learning disabilities. Learners have very significant intellectual or cognitive impairments. Learners with SLD may also have difficulties in mobility and co-ordination, communication and perception and the acquisition of self-help skills.</p>
<i>Special school</i>	<p>A school which is specifically organised to make special educational provision for pupils with SEN, these can be any type of school that is approved by the Secretary of State under Section 342 of the Education Act 1996.</p>
<i>SpLD</i>	<p>Specific learning difficulty. This affects a person's ability to process and organise information. These difficulties occur independently of intelligence and cause a severe impact on the person's ability to learn in one particular area only. The types include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dyslexia – causes difficulties in literacy, for example in spelling and reading;</li> <li>• dyscalculia – causes difficulties understanding mathematical concepts; and</li> <li>• dyspraxia – affects the fine and/or gross motor skills, which can cause difficulties with balance and co-ordination</li> </ul>
<i>Top up funding</i>	<p>If the cost of providing for a pupil with high needs is greater than the core/place funding of £10,000 then the LA pays a top up for that pupil. This is paid in real time and therefore only paid when a pupil is on roll in a school. In Wiltshire, and in most other LAs, a</p>



	banding system is operated in which pupils' needs are assessed against specific bands and a funding value is allocated to each band. All pupils in SS in Wiltshire attract top up funding.
<i>WASSP</i>	Wiltshire special school partnership (working group of LA officers and members, special school representatives, and other key stakeholders, including WPCC).
<i>WPCC</i>	Wiltshire Parent Carer Council