
Individual Cabinet Member Delegated Decision

Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills – Cllr Pauline Church

Service: Education and Skills

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Reference: 01_2020

Proposal to Increase Rowdeford School Place Numbers from 130 to 170

Purpose of Report

1. To approve the Council to make a prescribed alteration to Rowdeford Special School in Rowde, near Devizes, by increasing the school's current planned places number from 130 to 170.

Relevance to the Council's Business Plan

2. In line with the Council 2017 – 2027 business plan, there is a clear priority to protect those who are most vulnerable. The goal is to have “schools that help all pupils achieve” including those who “...are vulnerable to underachievement – including... those with Special Educational or Disabilities (SEND)”.

Background

3. Rowdeford School has 130 registered planned places. As of February 2020, following September 2019 intake and with growing demand, 166 children were attending the school. Department for Education (DfE) legislation requires that where the number of children attending a school varies by more than 10% from the registered planned places number, the registered number should be changed following statutory consultation.
4. Following guidance from Legal Services it was agreed with Rowdeford School to start the statutory four-week consultation period on 9 March 2020. During this formal consultation period there were no objections to the proposals from parent carers, staff or school governors.

Main Considerations for the Council

5. Following a period of review and consultation the main consideration is an increase in the number of planned places at Rowdeford Special School in Rowde, near Devizes, to 170. This will;

- Meet the existing and growing need for special school places
- Ensure compliance with Department for Education (DfE) legislation

Overview and Scrutiny Engagement

6. The pre-consultation involved planning a schedule and timeline as per DfE statutory guidance. We worked with Rowdeford School and produced the consultation document which outlined a proposal. During the pre-consultation, there were no objections to the proposals from parent carers, staff or school governors.
7. A four-week statutory consultation period has been observed, in accordance with the DfE guidelines and three responses have been received, all in favour of the proposal and no objections.

Safeguarding Implications

8. Safeguarding is central to the wellbeing of children educated at Rowdeford School and the high standards in practice will continue to be maintained and developed. There are no safeguarding implications for this proposal.

Public Health Implications

9. The proposal will allow children at Rowdeford school to continue their education there. There are no public health implications of this proposal.
10. All schools in Wiltshire will be responding to the Covid-19 pandemic following national and Wiltshire guidance. The increase in registered place numbers at Rowdeford school to align with current numbers of children will not impact this.

Procurement Implications

11. Not applicable.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

12. As a service for SEN children; a group the Council recognises has protected characteristics; the Council ensures that changes in service are not detrimental to their welfare or wellbeing. In this case, the proposal to increase registered place numbers to align with the children attending the school will continue to promote equal access.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

13. This proposal has no significant impact on environmental and climate change considerations. There is no significant change expected in the use of energy or utilities. There may be some small positive impact on the carbon footprint related to decreased travel (avoiding more students needing to travel to out of county schools), but this will be minimal

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision and related work is not taken

14. If the decision was made not to increase the number of registered places, Wiltshire would fail to meet the legislative requirements and DfE guidance because the increased number of children are already attending the school.
15. At present, the Office of the Schools Adjudicator is considering its decision about the amalgamation of Rowdeford School with Larkrise School and St Nicholas School. It would be especially unhelpful for Wiltshire to be failing to adhere to legislative requirements in relation to these schools at this time.

Risks that may arise if the proposed decision is taken and actions that will be taken to manage these risks

16. No risks have been identified.

Financial Implications

17. In November 2019, Wiltshire Council cabinet committed up to £33m to the North Special Schools project to increase the number of places and develop a 'system of excellence' for SEN provision. There are no additional financial implications of this proposal. Work is currently being planned with Rowdeford School relating to their current and ongoing needs relating to buildings work and classrooms for September 2020 and this work will go ahead due to the number of children attending the school irrespective of the registered places number.
18. Special school places continue to be funded by pupil attending the school, a change to the registered places number will not affect this.
19. The decision made by cabinet in November 2019 has committed the Council to expanding special school numbers longer term, reducing the need to use more, more expensive out of county placements.

Legal Implications

20. Rowdeford School is currently a maintained community special school and it is proposed that the number of registered planned places increases from 130 to 170. These changes are proposed by the local authority, supported by the governing body, and the decision maker is the local authority. Such a change to a maintained school is governed by The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 ('the Prescribed Alterations Regulations').
21. When exercising functions under these regulations regard must be had to guidance published by the Department of Education (DfE), "Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools" Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers (October 2018) guidelines. The process for making these prescribed alterations as set out in the guidance has been followed.

22. The cabinet member, as decision maker should also have regard to this guidance.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/756572/Maintained_schools_prescribed_alterations_guidance.pdf

Workforce Implications

23. The proposal is to regularise the registered places number with the number of children currently attending the school. This has no workforce implications.

Options Considered

24. Regularising the registered places number with the actual number of children attending the school would meet legislative requirements and can continue to be delivered with existing space and resource. The alternative 'do nothing' would carry the risks identified in this paper.

Proposal

25. **To Increase Rowdeford School Places Numbers from 130 to 170**

Reason for Proposal

26. To regularise the registered places number with the number of children attending the school, thereby meeting DfE legislative requirements and guidance.

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Appendices

- **Statutory Notice**
- **Proposal**