
Individual Cabinet Member Delegated Decision

Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children’s Services, Education and Skills – Cllr Laura Mayes

Service: Education and Skills

Officer Contact: Matthew Look, 01225 718303, matthew.look@wiltshire.gov.uk

Reference: CES-02-24

Proposal to Create a Resource Base at St Paul’s Primary School

Purpose of Report

1. To approve the Council to make a prescribed alteration to St Paul’s Primary School, Chippenham by creating a resource base (special educational needs provision).

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. An increased demand for SEN school places has been identified in Wiltshire, including Chippenham and North Wiltshire. Wiltshire Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places, including for children with SEN. St Paul’s Primary are a ‘Good’ school as judged by Ofsted and are keen to develop a resource base to meet the local need.
4. Following guidance from Legal Services it was agreed with St Paul’s Primary School to start the statutory four-week consultation period on 19 April 2024. During this formal consultation period there were three responses in favour of the proposal and no responses that were opposed to the proposal.

Main Considerations for the Council

5. Following a period of review and consultation the main consideration is the creation of a Resource Base at St Paul’s Primary School, Chippenham. This will help:

- meet the existing and growing demand for SEN school places in Chippenham and North Wiltshire
- meet the educational needs of Wiltshire children with SEN
- meet the council's statutory sufficiency duty for High Needs SEN school places
- ensure children can access school places closer to home
- minimise the use of high-cost independent special school provision
- 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 and it included an online information session for parent carers, school staff and governors. The SEND Place Planning Commissioning Lead worked with St Paul's Primary 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.

Safeguarding Implications

8. Safeguarding is central to the wellbeing of all children educated at St Paul's Primary 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. Health professionals will continue to work with St Paul's Primary School to ensure the health needs of pupils at the school are met. There are no public health implications of this proposal.

Procurement Implications

10. Not applicable.

Equalities Impact of the Proposal

11. 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 create a resource base for the 2024-25 academic year will increase the availability of high needs SEN school places for families.

Environmental and Climate Change Considerations

12. 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 out of Wiltshire for school), but this will be minimal.

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

13. If the decision was made not to create the resource base, it would be more difficult for Wiltshire Council to meet their statutory duty to provide sufficient SEN school places in North Wiltshire. There would be an increased likelihood of not having suitable available school provision to meet the needs of children with SEN and there would be an increased likelihood of children being placed at higher cost independent school placements and/or out of county placements with longer travel times.

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

14. No risks have been identified.

Financial Implications

15. Reconfiguration of existing space at the school is being completed and funded via the SEN capital budget allocated to the council for the purpose of creating additional special school places. There are no additional capital cost implications of this proposal.
16. Place funding for all children attending a resource base in Wiltshire is set and St Paul's Primary School resource base will receive SEN place funding in accordance with this existing policy. To ensure the provision is affordable in the first year a commitment has been made to fund a minimum of ten places.
17. There are no other financial considerations.

Legal Implications

18. St Paul's Primary School is a maintained community school. The creation of the resource base is proposed by the local authority, supported by the school's headteacher and 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').
19. 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 (January 2023) guidelines. The process for making these prescribed alterations as set out in the guidance has been followed.
20. The cabinet member, as decision maker should also have regard to this guidance. [Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1141217/making-significant-changes-to-maintained-schools-guidance-jan-2023.pdf)

Workforce Implications

21. St Paul's Primary School and Wiltshire Council are working closely together and the school is arranging for the appropriate staffing for the children at the resource base. This has no further workforce implications.

Options Considered

22. Creating the resource base for the 2024-25 academic year will help meet the identified need for specialist SEN school places in North Wiltshire. The alternative 'do nothing' would carry the risks identified in this paper.

Proposal

23. **To Create a Resource Base at St Paul's Primary School, Chippenham.**

Reason for Proposal

24. To provide specialist SEN school places for children in Chippenham and North Wiltshire assessed as needing this provision based on their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

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Appendices

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