

## **SPECIAL SCHOOLS PROPOSALS (19 November 2019)**

### **APPENDIX 4:**

#### **EMAIL RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION**

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1) 17/09/2019 from Rowde Parish Council

A resident has raised concern with the Parish Council regarding travel arrangements to the new proposed Special School at the Rowdeford site. They have requested that a condition is made that taxis are not permitted to use Conscience Lane to travel to and from the Rowdeford site. This is a one lane road in many places, passing is difficult and it is already heavily used as a cut through from Devizes to Rowde. The road infrastructure could not take a large additional volume of daily transport.

I hope that this request can be passed on. Thank you.

With kind regards,

2) 23/09/2019

To whom it may concern

I am somewhat concerned that local SEN schools are going to be closed in their area. It is well known that local small schools perform much better than the larger set up school, there is less likelihood for any child to be 'lost' within a smaller set up and individual needs not overlooked due to the pressures within a larger school.

I have either worked or been associated with Larkrise school since 1983. I have seen the coming and going of lots of children through the school. Sadly also some children who have passed over before the conclusion of their education with the school.

It's comforting to know that all staff know each other and all staff know all the children and we all follow their growth within the school. This means we also watch them for any problems as we see them in the school each day. This allows the staff to pick up on problems, big or small, that any child may be suffering at any said time that perhaps might have been hidden within their present class. I.e, a sudden limp or withdrawal of play, eating habits changed, saddens, anger even down to safeguarding where children might confide in you because you're such a familiar person in its day to day life etc..

This close watch of Pacific children will I fear get lost in a large and what will probably be a very impersonal school.

Travelling:- now already in Larkrise along we take from towns around Trowbridge and as a past PA for county from the 80's to the 2010's I feel I know a great deal about this process. One doesn't just 'load' as I've heard it called, on a transport be it a taxi with no PA or a mini bus that can carry, in my experience, one to three PAs on one bus for children displaying various problems. What I'm trying to say is Trowbridge and the surrounding towns that we currently take from already have long enough journeys each day, this in itself tiring for the majority of children travelling in this way. I'm sure I'm speaking also for St. Nicholas's when I point out these problems, so why are county planning to extend the travelling time for these very precious children with a wide range of problems (seizures, oxygen users, not to mention behavioural problems) I know all of these problems have been mentioned in a previous fact finding but completely ignored by the powers that be it seems.

These are just a few reasons why the three schools should be continuing to be independent of each other on their own sites where they are at present.

- Less stability for some children
- Longer travelling hours
- Less active learning through tiredness of travelling, not to mention more home problems with sleep patterns.
- More illness both children, parents and staff possibly. Already this is a high stress area to work and live in.
- Higher transport costings.

•One thing I haven't mention is that our children at present stay at school until 19 you are reducing this to 16 and then expecting them to return to their own area for further learning experiences if possible, but with college places already in very short supply can you have it on your conscience that lots of these children will have no placement and no future other than spending their days at home with little or nothing to do?

Sen schools must remain as small and as dedicated as they are at present so the best possible experience in learning for these children are achieved..... please, please think of the children's future and opportunities rather than your costings. One cannot nor should not equate these wonderful children to a costing on your spreadsheets. They're are human, they are of great worth to all of us, why are they not to the people trying to take their rightful needs away from them?

3) 25/09/2019

Dear Sirs

The pupils at these schools are medically, emotionally and environmentally vulnerable. Their parents/careers have had an immense struggle to help them to reach school age. Their ability to be cope with separation from their families is likely to be compromised, their ability to travel and to learn is also compromised. Much as I appreciate that Wiltshire is trying with a limited budget to cater for more of these children I reject that the answer is to ship them across the county to one large school. They and their families have an exceptional need to feel safe and secure and hopefully then to help them develop to their maximum potential. This is best achieved by continuing to let them access their local, community neighbourhood school with specialist provision.

4) 27/09/2019

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to express my views, as a parent of a child with complex needs as the result of a rare genetic syndrome, and as an early years practitioner who has worked as a 1-1 with several children with complex needs within a mainstream preschool, on the future of special needs educational provision within Wiltshire.

I think that from the early years through to post secondary 16 year+, the lack of choice for children with SEN makes it very difficult to access a good education for children with SEN, and does not reflect the wide range of needs that the 'label' SEN encompasses.

I believe there are a large amount of children who 'fall between the gaps' within the education system.

I think that alongside the lack of specialist provision, there are also difficulties in the way that mainstream settings (including those with resource bases) manage 'inclusion'.

The idea of resource bases or outreach (where children with SEN attend a specialist provision part time for inclusion sessions) seems to be a popular one, and on paper seems like a fantastic way of ensuring an education for those children who fall into the enormous gap that seems to lie between mainstream provision and specialist provision ( ie those with mild to moderate learning needs, high functioning ASD and complex needs alongside average IQ)

Unfortunately I think it is a flawed solution.

I think there are many children with additional needs who may be able to 'cope' in a mainstream environment, and others who will thrive. However, I think there are many children who, despite being able to access some of the curriculum, will find the environment of a mainstream school, too fast, too bright, too loud and ultimately overwhelming. The focus in many mainstream establishments is out of kilter with the needs of many of these children, who may have physical, emotional, communication, behavioural and sensory needs that need to be met before learning and even start.

In the case of resource bases, the experience we have had with our son in a complex needs resource base in a mainstream primary, has highlighted just how tricky this kind of provision can be for both the children and the school. With the resource base becoming a separate entity to the mainstream classes, by necessity of the needs of the children. If the resource base is to fulfil its remit of inclusion, the children then have to manage several transitions through their week, into mainstream classes where they may be isolated with a 1-1, in an environment that conflicts with the environment they work best in.....the resource base. In our experience, this constant change and the need to be constantly pushed into a mainstream environment has been extremely detrimental to our son's health.

The difficulties of outreach in order to fulfil inclusion aims are :

The aims, ethos and culture of a mainstream establishment are very different to those that a specialist provision may have.

Children, many of whom will have specific difficulties with change and transition, will be expected to cope with different environments, different groups of children, travelling between sites, different teachers, eating in different environments, and dealing with the very different cultures that develop within schools.

For children who struggle to socialise with peers, they will have to deal with two sets of peers, who may be establishing friendship groups whilst the child is in the other setting.

If a child is struggling in mainstream - due to class size, noise, crowded corridors, sensory issues etc - to expect them to switch to an environment where they don't struggle and then have to return to the environment they find difficult, could have a very detrimental effect on their wellbeing.

I don't think many people would want this level of change, and inconsistency for their 'mainstream' child, but it seems the expectations placed on children who struggle with these things day to day, are expected to cope.

I hope when considering the future of SEN provision in Wiltshire those who will be deciding how it will be shaped, will think about the above and in placing the child at the heart of their plans, consider the needs of all children whose lives will be affected by the future changes

Yours

5) 29/09/2019

Dear sir

I am writing to say how important I believe it is to have three sites, even if it has one leadership. Experience in other countries has shown that provision in local communities for

children with special needs significantly improved outcomes. Building on Rowde's expertise makes sense and I support the investment in the site.

6) 29/09/2019

These children need to be educated locally. Children with special needs do not like change and would find it disorientating to be travelling further and going to a different school. Also it must be better for them to be near their homes in case of emergency if a parent is needed. It will be more costly to transport these children to schools out of town. It would make it more difficult to transfer them to mainstream education in their own town which I presume would be the long term aim for most of the children. It would be damaging to the environment. Wiltshire Council has a responsibility to reduce climate change emissions.

Any decision of when and how a transfer to a single site school might be made in the future must be made by the parents and the authorities jointly.

If anything, we need to increase special schools not close them.

7) 29/09/2019

I have no direct involvement. I am 75 years old. My children have no disabilities, are now middle-aged, have children of their own, also without any disabilities, none being educated locally. I have much sympathy for disabled children and probably more so for the unfortunate parents.

Significantly disabled children are best educated at schools reasonably near to their homes. Local school sites should remain. I am dubious about the concept of a new central school on one site. It would inevitably mean increased travelling for many. Likely increased overall future requirement seems better done across several sites. Again, it is reasonably obvious, for lots of good reasons, that transport should be minimised. .

I believe that special needs education requires much compassion.

8) 30/09/2019 from Chippenham Town Council



Wiltshire Special Schools Consultation  
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Monday 30 September 2019

## Chippenham Town Council Response to Consultation

Dear Sir or Madam,

A meeting of Town Councillors was held on Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> September to consider a response to the Statutory Notice on the intention to discontinue three special schools; St Nicholas School, Chippenham, Rowdeford School, Devizes, and Larkrise School, Trowbridge.

As a result of this meeting and in consultation with my Councillors I have been asked to respond to your request for comments. The Town Council objects to the closure of St. Nicholas School on the grounds of the following:

### 1. Social Inclusion

Councillors are of the opinion that the majority of St. Nicholas students are from Chippenham and that they should be educated alongside their peers and not separated by having to travel to a school outside of the Town. The Council are of the view that special needs children should not be treated any differently to mainstream schoolchildren and should be educated within the Town.

An integral part of social learning of students who attend St. Nicholas School is that they derive from the community within it. This is due to children being recognised in the community by their peers and others and is an example of how children are learning to live their lives independently.

### 2. Transport

The Town Council has noted that the existing transport budget is under considerable pressure with increasing costs to be met from a reduction in overall budget. The travel time as set out in the proposals ignores pick-ups and that vulnerable children will be travelling further which in some cases exceeds the recommended maximum travel time as set out by Central Government.

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St. Nicholas School currently offers children the opportunity to get to a range of activities within walking distance. This would not be possible at the proposed new school in Rowde.

Finally, the Town Council feel that access to the new school would present a number of problems including congestion, increased pollution/CO2 emissions and other infrastructure costs that have not been fully considered. In addition visitors, volunteers and other professionals who need to attend St. Nicholas School will undoubtedly be put off from attending the new school due to the longer journey time.

### 3. Resources

The Town Council is aware that some of the students who attend St. Nicholas School have profound, life-limiting conditions and there is often the need for a parent or an ambulance to attend the School quickly. The location of St. Nicholas School is very close to an ambulance station and clearly such emergency services would take considerably longer to attend the new location in Rowde, should there be an emergency.

There would be considerable disruption to the teaching and pastoral care staff of St. Nicholas School should services be transferred to Rowde. It is questionable whether the current resource team including volunteers would relocate such a distance given the cost to individuals. It is also questionable whether there is sufficient population in Rowde to support the new school in terms of teaching/pastoral care staff.

Councillors noted that the hydrotherapy pool at St. Nicholas School was funded and supported by the people of Chippenham including numerous businesses and a large charity. It is unclear at this point whether the combined demand from three schools into one at Rowde would be able to provide sufficient hydrotherapy pool facilities.

### 4. Finances

The Town Council wishes to question whether the proposed budget of £20 million to provide a new school is realistic. Given comments already made on access roads and local infrastructure considerations it is questionable whether £20 million is an accurate capital figure to provide what is such a specialist school facility. In addition, the running costs of any new school should be brought into the decision making process.



Finally, Councillors provided the following comments against the new school proposal;

- Chippenham has unique support services including the hydrotherapy pool, Chippenham Borough Lands Charity as well as the funds and support for the School over the years through minibuses, improvement in equality which is not available in Rowde.
- The size of the school is important, with a smaller more intimate school being preferred.
- The large size of the new school would have to take into consideration the size of the car park and infrastructure to support this.
- The finance and running costs of the new school have not been detailed. There will be wider social and economic costs.
- The disruption to pupils who would have to move may cause psychological and emotional harm which could take months to overcome. To face different staff, and longer journeys. The transition from primary to secondary school is big anyway but increased with special school children.
- The location and access of the new school would affect the resources available to the children including activities and health services. The access is currently on a bend in the road and traffic would be greatly increased.
- The increased distance to the new location would have an impact in situations where a child is unwell at school and the child needed to be collected to return home.
- There is a good existing relationship with mainstream schools in Chippenham.
- There are better outcomes for special schools children when they are situated within the community
- The increasing number of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) which means the present schools have run out of space.
- Councillors are minded to recommend that any future housing developments within the town should include consideration of the needs of the increasing number of SEND children and lack of local facilities with special reference to infrastructure requirements.

Yours sincerely,

**Mark Smith**

Mark Smith MBA LLB (Hons) CMgr FCI FSLCC