

SEND Review of Education Provision 2018-21

Capacity and re - designation of special schools in Plymouth
Consultation



Background to this review:

The SEND Review of Educational Provision 2015-18 sets out a programme of work to consider capacity and sufficiency across the City to meeting the needs of pupils of SEND. We are making progress across the majority of the agreed outcomes and monitoring of this work continues. The review highlighted the need to consider the capacity and designation of special schools in Plymouth in order to ensure that we maximise the use of existing resources. This work will continue beyond 2018 and therefore has been built into the preparation of the SEND Review of Educational Provision 2018-21 in order to ensure continuity.

Plymouth has seven special schools, one of which is now part of a multi-academy trust.

School	Phase (Year Groups)	Designation	Number of planning places for pupils at last consultation	Number of actual pupils allocated a place at September 2018	Proposed Number of planning places for pupils at September 2019
Courtlands (academy status – part of ACE MAT)	Primary	BESD/ MLD	75	76	80
Brook Green Centre for Learning	Secondary	BESD/ MLD	80	96	96
Mount Tamar	Primary and Secondary	BESD	101	104	104
Longcause	Primary and Secondary	ASD/ MLD	98	102	102
Woodlands	Primary and Secondary and Post 16	PD/ PMLD/ MSI	75 + 10 post 16	88	88
Cann Bridge	Primary and Secondary and Post 16	SLD	72 +20 post 16	88	92
Mill Ford	Primary and Secondary and Post 16	PMLD/ SLD	100	100.6	100

Plymouth also has a range of Support Centres delivered by mainstream schools and alternative provision delivered by ACE in a number of locations across the city.

In order to undertake this review, the local authority made the decision to seek advice from an external specialist in special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) education. This work was funded through the provision of a grant from the Department for Education to support a strategic review of high needs pupils. The external advisor undertook their review during the summer on 2017 and provided a report to the local authority in October 2017.

The external advisor undertook a full review of the special school estate, but with attention to two areas of particular attention.

1. Planning for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH)

The SEND Review 2015-18 highlighted that we are seeing a rise in the number of reception pupils with severe SEMH needs and a shortage of places.

2. Planning for children and young people with autism spectrum condition (ASC)

The SEND Review 2015-18 highlighted the shortfall in specialist provision for young people with ASC, including those with learning difficulties or other complex needs. The work from stakeholders to develop an ASC-focussed Free School has not been successful to date and therefore the shortfall remains for children and young people in the City.

The external review helped us understand the following:

- We have always started from the premise that Plymouth was a high placing and high spending local authority on SEND. *The data evidenced that we are 'mid' table on most indicators.*
- We are concerned that the lack of funding has had an impact on the ability to innovate and stimulate new markets locally. *The data confirmed that this is a challenge for Plymouth.*
- Our Special Schools in Plymouth are full and the data highlights that this estate is, and will be, under growing pressure as the population of children and young people with SEND grows. The review of data confirmed our local understanding that there is particular pressure in relation to children and young people identified with SEMH and ASC. *The advice is that we need to plan for an increase in the number of special school places for future years.*
- Lack of capacity for post 16 SEND provision. *We must prioritise, especially in view of the growing number of students.*
- Some special schools lack appropriate, quality, learning environments in terms of their buildings. Although there has been investment, no significant change has occurred in the estate in recent years.
- Funding for special schools is a significant issue and that the current systems of allocation of top up funding through the High Needs Block needs to be reviewed, as it was not sufficiently reflecting the cost of provision for a pupil.
- The current designation of schools in Plymouth is unhelpful and no longer reflects the profile of SEND. We need to review designation and simplify in order to develop a better offer to meet the needs of pupils.
- In order to meet the increase in demand and improve the quality of provision, capital investment need should be assessed and funding sought. We were advised that this work could consider post 16 capacity within the capital planning.

1. Special School Re – designation

We are proposing that it would be beneficial to review the designations of special schools in three phases. These phases will be aligned to the 3 yearly cycle of the SEND review and framework.

Phase 1 (2018 – 19): Change designations of special schools to a complex needs definition.

Phase 2 (2019 – 2021): Establish workstreams to understand patterns of need in the medium and long terms.

Phase 3 (2021 – 2022): Carry out a detailed review of special school designations based on emerging patterns of need in the medium and long terms.

The plans outlined in this document relate only to phase 1 of this plan.

The current designation categories for our special schools do not reflect the language of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Code Practice: 0-25 years (2015), nor do they reflect how understanding about the needs of young people has developed.

As a result, there is a need within our strategic planning to restate the purpose of our special schools for future years. This will recognise our ongoing commitment to promote positive inclusion within mainstream school provision for children and young people with SEND, balanced with the evidence that complexity of need for some children and young people has increased significantly.

Therefore, it is proposed that the designation of all special schools is changed to 'complex needs'. In addition to this, each school is described through a general and a specific criteria. Each of the specific criteria reflects the current designation of each special school.

General criteria for entry into a special school:

1. All pupils will have an Education Health and Care plan. They will require consistent personalised learning support programmes every day of the week all year round in order to achieve their potential.
2. It is demonstrated that pupils will benefit from a small classes and a peer group, to support both learning and social and emotional development in a nurturing environment.
3. Parents have expressed a preference for the school.
4. The school is suitable to the child's age, ability, aptitude and special educational needs.
5. Admission to the school is not incompatible with the efficient education and efficient use of resources.

In addition to this, the following specific criteria for admission applies:

Cann Bridge School

1. Pupils will have an education health and care plan that refers to cognition and learning as the primary need. Pupils' learning difficulties will mean, for example, that they will not be engaged with subject specific learning by the time they reach the end of key stage 1 or 2. Development in cognition learning will centre on a range of skills that will enable pupils to engage in learning situations and on their growing ability to seek out or direct learning opportunities autonomously.
2. Pupils will have a communication and interaction need, for example, a speech and language need such as the delayed onset of language and/or autism.
3. Some pupils will have a physical disability.

Mill Ford School

1. Pupils will have an education health and care plan that refers to cognition and learning as the primary need. Pupils' learning difficulties will mean, for example, that they will not be engaged with subject specific learning by the time they reach the end of key stage 1 or 2. Development in cognition learning will centre on a range of skills that will enable pupils to engage in learning situations and on their growing ability to seek out or direct learning opportunities autonomously.
2. Pupils will have a communication and interaction need, for example, a speech and language need such as the delayed onset of language and/or autism.
3. Some pupils will have a physical disability.

Courtlands School

1. Pupils will have an Education, Health and Care Plan that refers to cognition and learning as the primary need. Whilst pupils will be able to access a subject based curriculum; pupils' special educational needs will affect their rate of cognitive development or speed of learning. This will mean that they will be working well below the standard of national curriculum tests at key stage 1 and 2.
2. Pupils will have an SEMH need. This might present in ways including vulnerability to suggestion and significant difficulty in managing peer interactions.
3. Some pupils will have a communication and interaction need, for example, autism and/or a speech and language need.

Brook Green Centre for Learning

1. Pupils will have an Education, Health and Care Plan that refers to cognition and learning as the primary need. Whilst pupils will be able to access a subject based curriculum; pupils' special educational needs will affect their rate of cognitive development or speed of learning. This will mean that they will be working well below the standard of programmes of study at key stage 3 and key stage 4 national tests.
2. Pupils will have an SEMH need, this might present in ways including vulnerability to suggestion and significant difficulty in managing peer interactions.
3. Some pupils will have a communication and interaction need, for example, autism and/or a speech and language need.

Mount Tamar School

1. Pupils will have an Education, Health and Care Plan that refers to a SEMH need as the primary need. This will present as unpredictable and risky behaviour which is likely to result, or resulted in, exclusion from a mainstream setting(s).
2. Some pupils will have a communication and interaction need, for example, speech and language and/or autism.
3. Pupils will be able to access a subject based curriculum. The majority of students will be working at the standard of national curriculum tests at each relevant key stage. Where pupils are not, it will be because of restricted access to the relevant programme of study rather than their rate of cognitive development or speed of learning.

Longcause Community Special School

1. Pupils will have an Education, Health and Care Plan that refers to communication and interaction as the primary need. This will be autism.
2. Whilst pupils will be able to access a subject based curriculum; pupils' SEND will affect their rate of cognitive development or speed of learning. This will mean that they will be working well below the standard of national curriculum tests at each relevant key stage as well as key stage 4 national tests.
3. Some pupils will have an SEMH need which will be associated with their diagnosis of autism.

Woodlands School

1. Pupils will have an education health and care plan that refers to sensory and physical as the primary need. This will be a multi-sensory impairment and/or a physical disability and/or the impact of long-term illness and/or social communication difficulties. Pupils' complex disabilities will mean that they are likely to require specialist care for a range of medical needs, for example, gastrostomies and tracheostomies.

2. Pupils will have a range of learning difficulties. For some, this will mean that they will not be engaged with subject specific learning. Development in cognition and learning will centre on a range of skills that will enable pupils to engage in learning situations and on their growing ability to seek out or direct learning opportunities autonomously. Other pupils will be able to access a subject based curriculum. However, pupils' special educational needs will affect their rate of cognitive development or speed of learning. This will mean, for example, that they will be working well below the standard of national curriculum tests at each relevant key stage.
3. Some pupils will have a communication and interaction need, such as autism.

Changes to the designations of the special schools will require a public consultation. In order to achieve wider strategic planning together, and maintain parental confidence in this plan, the Local Authority is proposing to carry out a single consultation exercise to complete this work. This will ensure that the changes across the estate can be understood in the widest sense and potential impact considered during the consultation.

Following Executive Decision approval, the consultation is a formal staged process with some statutory timescales.

Stage 1

Publication of the statutory proposal/notice

Stage 2

Representation/formal consultation. This is a minimum of 4 weeks and ideally should not include holiday periods.

Stage 3

Decision making should take place within 2 months of the closing of Stage 2 by the LA

Stage 4

Implementation of changes.. The implementation should take place within the published timeframe with any alterations following consultation which is 2 Months.

It is proposed that the consultation will commence in the summer term 2018.

2. Capacity

The pressure of demand on special school places is understood and we have considered this from a wider education system perspective and the ongoing work to promote inclusion in all settings. Notwithstanding this, benchmarking data demonstrates that there is a need to plan for additional places within our local special schools.

Plymouth City Council is mindful that there is local work to see a Free School for pupils with ASC open in the Plymouth area. We have provide data regarding this area of need to inform those parties as this is a recognised area of shortfall in the SEND Review 2015-18.

This planning will need to be aligned to planning for capacity in the support centres (part of the SEND Review scope). Therefore it will require a staged approach to planning.

3. Review of capital requirements:

Plymouth has invested significantly in a number of projects using a combination of central government and local government funding. The changes in complexity of need, and the increase in pupils requiring such provision, are creating an issue. If we take account of previously mentioned statistical evidence, the growth in demand is not going to ease. Larger cohorts entering, as opposed to leaving, this fact is going to add pressure to an already stretched system.

Within the Special School Review, the recommendation is that by 2022 the capital programme for the special school estate is completed.

Actions required:

a. Mill Ford School

Plymouth City Council understands that the buildings of Mill Ford School require capital investment. To date, it has not been possible to secure capital funding that would enable a full rebuild of the site. To date the school have invested into the physical environment but this does not achieve the required improvements. In order to consider the range of potential capital-funded improvements that would be possible in the school with an understanding of the how each option will create additional capacity with regard to numbers, complexity of pupil need and education phase a fully costed feasibility study will be undertaken.

b. ACE Multi-Academy Trust

Plymouth City Council will provide a dataset regarding capacity and demand on the special school estate in order work in partnership with Trustees to consider capital requirements for Courtlands Special School.

c. Post 16 specialist capacity

Our SEND Preparing for Adulthood plan has undertaken a range of work to develop the post 16 offer for young people. We know that for some young people with very complex needs who attend a special school, a specialist post 16 offer is needed which is able to draw on the specialist skills and expertise available through the our special school workforce. However, we want to be able to provide young people with the opportunity to benefit from a college experience as part of their education offer and transition planning.

Therefore, we are proposing to undertake a feasibility study of the development of a post 16 'college' offer with separate sites across the special school estate in Plymouth. The data and gaps in current/planned provision indicate that two provisions of this type are required. One should cater for a Sensory based curriculum, meeting the needs of the most complex students medically and academically and the other should cater for students with complex needs who require a work-related focus to their studies in order that a clear pathway for future learning and employment can be established.

Undertake a feasibility study of the provision for young people with the most complex needs medically and academically, in partnership with health and social care commissioners in order to consider opportunities for an offer that supports holistic and smooth transition into adulthood.

d. Maintained special schools – review of buildings

In view of the expected and continued growth in the number and complexity of children with SEND who require special school provision, we need to ensure that our accommodation is fit for purpose. Therefore we will need to undertake a review of each maintained special school site to consider three areas:

- i) The maximum number of commissioned places available in the existing provision on each site and understand of the limitations of this with regard to specific needs of pupils.
- ii) The potential to build on existing school sites in future years.
- iii) The requirements for any minor adaptations arising from the consultation on designation of special schools.

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