



Consultation on a proposal to open a Communication and Interaction (Autism) Unit at Overstone Combined School

Proposal to open a Communication and Interaction (Autism) Unit at Overstone Combined School

Buckinghamshire Council, with the support of the Governing Body of Overstone Combined School, are seeking your views on our proposal to open a Communication and Interaction (Autism) Unit at Overstone Combined School, Wing.

Over the last five years, the number of Special Educational Needs and Disabled (SEND) pupils with an Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP) has increased by 64% (2577 pupils). Current projections forecast a further 32% increase in the number of EHCP pupils over the next five years.

Children and young people with communication and interaction needs is one of the areas of need that has been rising most (1642 or 82% over the last 5 years) with projections forecasting a further increase of 1080 pupils or 30% over the next 5 years.

Our SEND Education Sufficiency Strategy identified the need for a 12 place primary age inclusion unit for children with Communication and Interaction (Autism) needs at a mainstream school in Aylesbury Vale. To meet this demand, we are proposing to open a Communication and Interaction (Autism) Unit at Overstone Combined School, Wing. This would be a 12 place Unit for pupils with Communication and Interaction (Autism) needs as detailed in their Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP). Only children whose EHCP stated they needed support from a unit would be admitted and admissions will be controlled by the SEND team; parents would not be able to apply directly to the school for a place in the unit.

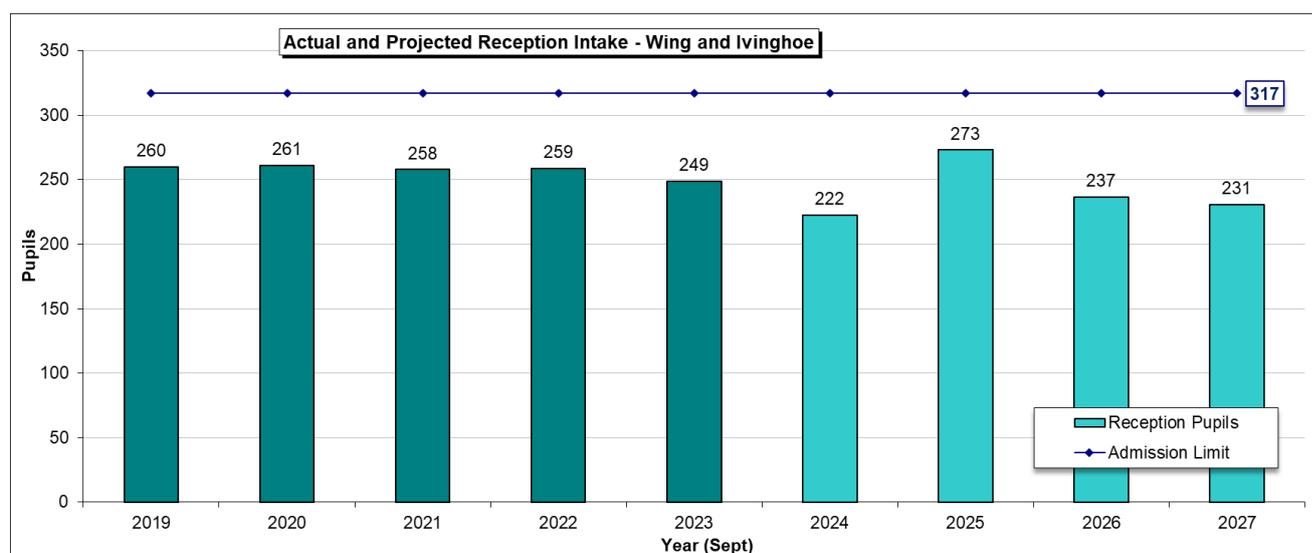
Overstone Combined School currently has a Planned Admission Number (PAN) of 42 pupils in each year group. However, pupil numbers are well below these levels and the school currently has no more than 32 pupils in any year group (see Table 1 below) and demand for school places is not expected to rise (see Figure 1 below). This means a number of rooms in the school are currently underused. In order to facilitate this proposal, Overstone Combined School will be consulting separately to reduce its PAN to 30 in Key Stage 1 and 32 in Key Stage 2. Reducing the PAN will make the school more financially secure for the future, simplify curriculum planning and ensure that there is space for the new SEND unit on the school site. The change in PAN would be subject to a separate consultation by the school governors (by following the process set out in paragraphs 1.45-1.52 of the Admissions Code) and, assuming it is agreed, the new PAN would come into effect from September 2026. The

12 places in the unit would be in addition to the 218 mainstream places at the school. If the decision is made not to reduce the PAN, the LA will need to consider whether or not to proceed with the opening of the unit.

Table 1: Current Pupil Numbers in Overstone Combined School

Year Group	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
Pupils	22	15	30	27	24	29	32

Figure 1: Past and Projected Reception Pupil Numbers in the Wing & Ivinghoe Planning Area



The school historically catered for 294 children and under the proposed scheme it will only accommodate a maximum of 230 which will include pupils in the unit. The proposal will therefore have reduced parking/drop off requirements to those required historically. Further, the school will implement different start and finish times for the Unit to help reduce traffic for local residents further. Currently, the school gates open for preschool children at 8:30am with all other children arriving between 8:35am and 8:45am. All children are collected at 3:15pm. It is proposed that the start and finish times for the new Unit would be 8:30am arrival and 3:00pm departure. Having different start and finish times for the children in the Unit would be hugely beneficial to the children and would help with parking and traffic at the school during peak hours.

Like most schools there can be congestion outside the school for short periods during morning drop off and afternoon pick up. The school is already actively working to reduce congestion in the area. They have an up-to-date Bronze Travel Plan and are constantly looking at ways to minimise the impact of morning drop off/afternoon pick up on the local area. The reduction in the admission number will also effectively reduce the impact of traffic in the local area.

What would this mean for pupils and staff at the school?

A key aim of the unit is to enable pupils to access a mainstream curriculum, whilst accessing specific specialist support. Pupils attending the unit would spend most of their time based within the new Unit. The new Unit will be self-contained with its own outside play area. Pupils in the Unit will be able to join in with parts of the school day, where appropriate. Specialist teachers would be employed to manage the new Unit. All staff working in the Unit will have received specialist training on supporting children with Autism. The Unit will be staffed with two teachers and learning support assistants; additional professionals will support the children including a speech and language therapist and occupational therapist. Additional professionals will be employed depending on the needs of the children, such as a play therapist, an art therapist etc.

Overstone Combined School staff would also have additional training in neuro- diversity, building on existing expertise in that area. As the children in the Unit will be part of the school, it is important all staff understand how to support children with autism needs - this level of expertise will benefit all children at the school and not just those in the Unit.

How would the unit be funded?

The new Unit would be accommodated in refurbished rooms at the front of the school. As part of the works to create the new unit, the calm room and wrap around care/food tech room would be relocated in refurbished rooms elsewhere in the school building. The unit will have its own outdoor play area on the site of the old swimming pool which was removed over the summer.

The cost of the refurbishment will be funded using government funding that has been made available for providing new/expanding existing SEND provision across the county. Additional revenue funding would be provided to fund the Unit. It would therefore not have a detrimental impact on the school's existing revenue budget or impact on provision for pupils.

Opportunity to meet with us to discuss these proposals

We appreciate that this letter may raise questions for you relating to this proposal. A consultation briefing for parents/carers will be held on 14 October 2024 at 5pm where any questions can be raised. The school will provide childcare for Overstone Combined School children, if their parents/carers wish to attend this meeting. (Childcare will need to be booked in advance. Please contact the school if you require a place.)

Following this meeting parents/carers, local residents and any other interested parties are welcome to attend a drop-in session on 14 October 6-7pm to view the proposed plans for the building. Representatives from the Local Authority will be present at the meeting.

Timetable for these proposals

The proposed timetable below, which may be subject to change, sets this timeline and next steps out:

Start Date	End Date	Description
30 September 2024	10 November 2024	Six week informal public consultation
14 October 2024 5pm		Parent briefing at the school
14 October 2024 6-7pm		Drop-in session for all interested parties to view the plans
11 November 2024	13 December 2024	Consultation responses assessed and decision taken by Buckinghamshire Council and the Governing Body of Overstone Combined School whether to propose opening a Communication and Interaction Unit.
8 January 2025	29 January 2025	Subject to the decision above: Publication of Statutory Notice and formal 4 week representation period
30 January 2025	26 March 2025	Buckinghamshire Council and School Governing Body review the responses from the consultation. Leader of Buckinghamshire Council in consultation with Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services takes a decision on the final outcome
April 2025	August 2025	Subject to the outcome above, building works commence/finish.
September 2025		Subject to the outcome above, the Communication and Interaction Unit will open.

How to have your say

We want to hear your views on this proposal. The views of parents, pupils and the wider community will be considered by the Governing Body and Buckinghamshire Council when determining whether to publish a Statutory Notice.

You can tell us your views in one of the following ways:

- complete the online survey at <https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/>
- complete, and return, a printed version of the survey below
- email us at overstoneschoolconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

All documents and updates will also be available on the school website:

<https://www.overstone-wing.bucks.sch.uk/web>

Please tell us your views by 11:59pm on 10 November 2024.

1. Do you agree with the proposal to open a Communication and Interaction (Autism) SEND Unit at Overstone Combined School, Wing?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:

2. Do you understand why the proposal to open a Communication and Interaction (Autism) SEND Unit at Overstone Combined School has been made?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

If 'No' or 'I don't know', please tell us why:

3. If you think there is anything that has not been considered when developing the proposals to open a Communication and Interaction (Autism) SEND Unit at Overstone Combined School, please tell us here:

4. If you have any other comments about the proposals to open a Communication and Interaction (Autism) SEND unit at Overstone Combined School please tell us here:

About you

We will use the information you provide here only for the purpose of this activity. We will store the information securely in line with data protection laws and will not share or publish any personal details.

5. Which of the following describe you?

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- I am a parent or carer of a student at Overstone Combined School
- I work at Overstone Combined School
- I am a Governor for Overstone Combined School
- I am a student at Overstone Combined School
- I live near Overstone Combined School
- I work at another local school in the area
- I represent or own a business in Buckinghamshire
- I represent a community or voluntary group in Buckinghamshire
- I am an elected representative in Buckinghamshire
- I represent a Parish / Town Council or Town Committee in Buckinghamshire
- I work for Buckinghamshire Council
- Other (please give details below):

6. How did you find out about this consultation?

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- Letter from the school
- School staff briefing
- Local media (newspaper, radio, TV, website or newsfeed)
- Social media (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram, Nextdoor or LinkedIn)
- Buckinghamshire Council website or Your Voice Bucks website
- Email or newsletter from Buckinghamshire Council
- Buckinghamshire Council staff or other professionals
- Through working at Buckinghamshire Council
- Poster or leaflet
- Friend or family member
- Local community or special interest group
- Councillor, town/parish council or community board
- Other (please give details below):

7. Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation (e.g. a business or a voluntary group)?

Please tick (✓) one option

- As an individual (go to question 9)
- On behalf of an organisation

On behalf of an organisation

8. Please provide the following details:

Name of organisation:

Your job title:

End of survey if responding on behalf of an organisation

More about you

We want to hear from as many people as possible to understand the views and needs across Buckinghamshire. The following questions help us see if the communities we serve have had the opportunity to be heard through this activity.

We will use the information you provide here only for the purpose of this activity. We will store the information securely in line with data protection laws and will not share or publish any personal information.

All questions are optional. You can skip any questions you do not wish to answer.

9. What is your postcode?

We want to understand the views of people living in different areas. You don't have to provide your postcode, but it helps us plan and make considered decisions.

10. What is your age?

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of different age groups.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Under 16
- 16 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 to 84
- Over 85
- Prefer not to say

11. Are you:

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of different sexes.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

12. Do you consider yourself to have a disability / disabilities, impairment(s) or long term health condition(s)?

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of disabled people, people with impairments and people with long-term health conditions.

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- Disability / disabilities
- Impairment(s)
- Long term health condition(s)
- No
- Prefer not to say

13. How would you describe your ethnicity?

Why we ask this: We want to understand the experiences and views of different ethnicities.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Asian - British
- Asian - Bangladeshi
- Asian - Chinese
- Asian - Indian
- Asian - Pakistani
- Any other Asian background - Please give details below

- Black - African
- Black - British
- Black - Caribbean
- Any other Black, African or Caribbean background - Please give details below

- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black British
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - Mixed or Multiple Ethnic backgrounds British
- Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background - Please give details below

- White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- White - Irish

- White - Gypsy or English traveller
- White - Irish Traveller
- White - European
- Any other White background - Please give details below

- Other ethnic group - Arab
- Other ethnic group - Arab British
- Other ethnic group - Please give details below

- Prefer not to say

Please give other details here:

End of the survey

Your comments are important as we do not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view when considering representations made on proposals.

Please email this questionnaire to overstoneschoolconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk

Or post to:

**The School Commissioning Team
Buckinghamshire Council
1st Floor Walton Street Office
Aylesbury
HP20 1UZ**

before the closing date of 10 November 2024