



# **Notification of proposal by Buckinghamshire Council to open a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Unit and the closure of the Additional Resource Provision (ARP) at Juniper Hill School**

## **Contact details**

Proposal, published by Buckinghamshire Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP19 8FF, to open a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Unit and the closure of the Additional Resource Provision (ARP) at Juniper Hill School, Churchill Close, Flackwell Heath, High Wycombe HP10 9LA

## **Implementation**

It is proposed to open an SEMH Unit and close the ARP with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2024

## **Reason for the Proposal**

The [SEN Sufficiency Strategy](#) for Buckinghamshire identified the need for two 12 place primary age Inclusion Units for children with SEMH at a school in the Wycombe area and in the Aylesbury Vale area. The Local Authority has evidenced that those children and young people, with social communication needs (autism) and social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH) are our fastest growing area of need in the Wycombe area. As such, we have concluded that additional resources must be targeted in this area.

In addition to the proposal to open a new SEND Unit, Buckinghamshire Council is also proposing to withdraw the Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) for pupils with a physical disability at Juniper Hill School from September 2024. Having reviewed demand for places and the Council's on-going work to make sure it can offer the right provision for children with a range of SEND needs, it was considered that a physical disability ARP was no longer required at the school. Increasingly children with a physical disability that require a mainstream school place are able to access their local school with the benefits of being part of their local school community.

## **Proposal 1: Proposal to open a SEMH Unit**

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 50% (1805 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 and social, emotional and mental health needs is increasing most (1424 or 64% over the last 5 years) with projections forecasting a further increase of 1533 pupils or 42% over the next 5 years.

The Council's [SEND Education Sufficiency Strategy](#) identified the need for two, 12 place primary age inclusion units for children with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs at a school to serve the Wycombe and Aylesbury area which have the highest incident of need.

To help meet this demand, we are proposing to open a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Unit at Juniper Hill School, High Wycombe. This would be a 12 place Unit for pupils with SEMH needs as detailed in their Educational Health Care Plan (EHCP).

The 12 places would be in addition to in the existing school pupil numbers of 420.

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 who have experienced trauma and have insecure attachments. The Unit will be staffed with two teachers and learning support assistants; additional professionals will support the children including, a speech and language therapist, occupational therapist and play therapist. Additional professionals will be employed depending on the needs of the children, such as, an art therapist etc. The staff working in the unit will have access to supervision.

Juniper Hill School staff would also have specialist SEMH training, as the children in the Unit will be part of the school. It's important all staff understand how to support children with SEMH needs - this level of expertise will benefit all children at the school not just in the Unit.

### **Project costs and an indication of how these will be met**

The new Unit would be accommodated in a new building within the school grounds. The proposal is to build the Unit on the former swimming pool area which is currently an unused part of the school site. Additional staff parking would also be provided. The cost of the new building 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.

### **Proposal 2: to close the physical disability Additional Resource Provision at Juniper Hill School**

The Council, with the support of the Governing Board of Juniper Hill School, are also proposing to withdraw the Additional Resourced Provision (ARP) for pupils with a physical disability (PD) at Juniper Hill School.

The need for a primary PD ARPs across Buckinghamshire has decreased over the past five years. The ARP originally opened with a maximum number of 12 places for pupils but as demand decreased over the years this reduced to 7. There are currently 4 pupils attending the Juniper Hill ARP.

The Pupils in the ARP currently spend most of their time in mainstream classes (only attending the ARP facilities for individual support e.g. for therapeutic support) whereas pupils who will be attending the new SEMH Unit will spend the majority of their time in the Unit.

Having reviewed demand for places and the Council's on-going work to make sure it can offer the right provision for children with a range of SEND needs, it was considered that a physical disability ARP was no longer required at the school.

Children with a physical disability attending a mainstream school are increasingly able to access their local school with the benefits of being part of their local school community. With the delivery of new schools across the county and adaptations being made to existing schools more children are now able to be educated within their own communities as schools have become increasingly able to meet the needs of pupils with a wide range of SEND needs. This has therefore reduced the number of children who have needed to be placed into PD ARPs across the county.

### **What would this mean for pupils in the ARP?**

Pupils currently in the Juniper Hill School Physical Disability ARP would continue to receive the same level of support, as they currently receive, throughout their time at the school.

We would work closely with parents of children and young people in the ARP to make sure the proposed closure had no negative impacts on pupils.

Juniper Hill School would continue to offer places to children that have physical disability needs where they meet the school's admissions criteria.

### **Statutory process for prescribed alterations**

The Local Authority and Governing Board is required to publish statutory proposals when it seeks to make a significant change to a school. The statutory process is summarised below:

**Stage 1: Consultation** Proposers must consult with the parents of registered pupils at the school and should consult with key stakeholders including:

- the governing board
- the diocese or relevant faith group of school's affected by the proposal;
- teachers and other staff at the school;
- any LA likely to be affected by the proposal
- the governing bodies, teachers and other staff of any other school that may be affected;
- parents of any pupils at other schools who may be affected by the proposal;
- any trade unions who represent staff at the school;
- MPs whose constituencies include the school that is the subject of the proposal or whose constituents are likely to be affected by the proposal;
- any other interested organisation / person that the proposer thinks are appropriate

**Stage 2:** Statutory proposal published within 12 months of the initial consultation stage, this must contain sufficient information for interested parties to make a decision on whether to support or challenge the proposed change.

**Stage 3:** Representation - once proposals are published there follows a four week statutory period during which representations (e.g. objections or comments) can be made. The representation period is the final opportunity for people and organisations to express their views about the proposals.

**Stage 4:** Decision – the Council must decide proposals within two months of the end of the representation period, otherwise the proposal will be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.

**Stage 5:** Implementation – In general, proposals should be implemented within three years of their publication.

### **Outcome of the Consultation Stage**

The first stage consultation process on Proposal to open a 12 place SEMH Unit at Juniper Hill School and to close the ARP for pupils with a Physical Disability at Juniper Hill School commenced on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023 and concluded on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2023. In line with statutory requirements the consultation letter was sent to the following consultees and also promoted via a dedicated webpage and survey on Your Voice Bucks.

In line with statutory requirements a consultation letter was sent to all parents/carers of children on roll at the School, governors and staff at the School, schools in the local area, all special schools and other statutory consultees. Copies of the consultation letter were also sent to the following stakeholders:

- Local residents;
- Local MP, Councillors, Parish Council
- Trade Union representatives;
- Church Diocese representatives;
- FACT Bucks

In addition, two meetings were held at the school. The first, a briefing session for parents/carers, was held on Tuesday 20 June 2023 at 3:45pm which was attended by around 30 people which included some Juniper Hill School staff. LA officers were also in attendance at the meeting to answer questions from parents/carers/staff.

The second, a drop in session for the wider public/local residents, was held at the school on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> June from 5pm - 7pm so that people could drop in to look at the plans and ask any questions that they had. One member of the public attended and viewed the plans.

The Council received 30 responses to the consultation proposal. 22 of these came in via the Your Voice consultation page and 8 came to the consultation mailbox or by post to the School Commissioning Team.

In summary of the 30 who responded 15 (50%) were in agreement with the proposal to open an SEMH UNIT; 11 (37%) did not agree; and, 4 (13%) didn't know or didn't say.

Of the 30 who responded to the proposal to close the PD ARP; 17 (57%) agreed with the proposal; 6 (20%) disagreed; and, 7 (23%) didn't know or didn't say.

<b>Agree/Disagree to the proposal to open an SEMH Unit and close the PD ARP</b>				
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know/Didn't say</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Open SEMH Unit	15	11	4	30
Close PD Unit	17	6	7	30

Of the 30 responses received 26 (86.6%) said they understood the proposal to open an SEMH UNIT; 2 (6.7%) said they didn't understand; and, 2 (6.7%) didn't know or didn't say.

Of the 30 who responded to the proposal to close the PD ARP; 22 (73%) said they understood the proposal to close the PD ARP; 4 (13.5%) said they didn't understand; and, 4 (13.5%) didn't know or didn't say.

<b>Understand Proposal to open an SEMH Unit and close the PD ARP</b>				
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know/Didn't say</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Open SEMH Unit	26	2	2	30
Close PD Unit	22	4	4	30

### **Timetable for these proposals**

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

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description</b>
13 <sup>th</sup> October 2023 - 9 <sup>th</sup> November 2023	Publication of Statutory Notice and formal 4 week representation period
November 2023	Buckinghamshire Council and School Governing Board review the responses from the consultation.

December 2023	Leader of Buckinghamshire Council in consultation with Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services takes a decision on the final outcome
February 2024 – August 2024	Subject to the outcome above, building works commence/finish.
31 <sup>st</sup> August 2024	Subject to the outcome above, the PD ARP Closes
1 <sup>st</sup> September 2024	Subject to the outcome above, the SEMH Unit will open.

**Procedure for making representations (objections and comments)**

Within four weeks of the date of publication of this proposal, any person may agree, object to, or make comments on the proposal online via the Buckinghamshire Council consultation website: [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/juniper-hill-statutory-notice](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/juniper-hill-statutory-notice)

Alternatively, representations can be made by email to:  
[FurzeDownandBuckinghamConsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:FurzeDownandBuckinghamConsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

or by post to:

The School Commissioning Team  
 Buckinghamshire Council  
 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
 Walton Street Office  
 Aylesbury  
 Buckinghamshire, HP20 1UZ

The closing date for comments is midnight Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2023

