

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SUNDERLAND

NOTIFICATION OF STATUTORY PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN) UNIT AT MILL HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Local Authority Proposal

Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, that it is the intention of Sunderland City Council, City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland, SR1 3AA to:

Develop a 16 place SEN unit at **Mill Hill Primary School** for primary aged pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) with effect from 1st September 2024.

Mill Hill Primary School is a maintained primary school maintained by Sunderland City Council.

The new provision will be developed on the current Mill Hill Primary School site with pupils attending the unit expected to access resources from both the resourced unit and from within the wider mainstream school offer.

Reason for the Development of a Special Educational Needs Unit at Mill Hill Primary School

The number of children who require additional support due to a special educational need has increased in Sunderland. More children are now attending mainstream schools who require significant additional interventions to support them in their school place. This at times can exceed what a mainstream school has the resources to offer.

There is an identified need to increase the range and quantity of high-quality SEN provisions in local areas. This ensures children for whom a mainstream school place is appropriate to them can continue to access that within their own locality, while also ensuring schools have the correct resources to meet increasing demand from pupils with additional SEN needs.

The Council proposes that, to make provision more accessible for a wider range of families, it will create a SEN provision at Mill Hill Primary School for pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans on the Autistic Spectrum. This will allow children who require a greater level of support from within the locality to access an appropriate school place with bespoke support.

The unit will complement the mainstream offer at the school with children on roll accessing both the mainstream resource and educational offer and an SEN offer from within a specific base in the school.

The proposal will ensure additional facilities are available to meet educational, sensory and nurture needs, provide access to specialist equipment (where required) and, by creating a local SEN offer, will reduce the time children are required to travel to access a special school place.

The proposal would secure the following outcomes:

Increased Capacity Within the Local SEN Sector

The proposal will add an additional 16 primary school places to Sunderland's current SEN offer. Given the proposal aims to ensure SEN places are available in localities in the first instance it is anticipated that children accessing provision would be from South Sunderland with children from other planning areas accessing places as appropriate.

Increased Appropriateness of SEN Placements

The ongoing diversification of the range of SEN provision in Sunderland will ensure that there are multiple levels of placements for local children. The creation of additional resourced units provides greater opportunity for those children who can thrive in a mainstream environment but who need

additional support, while those who require a special school place are more likely to be accommodated quicker due to the increased local capacity across the wider SEN sector.

Increased Efficiencies in Commissioning

A consequence of increasing local access to SEN provision is that pupils do not have to travel as far to access central, citywide or out of area provisions. Being able to provide local facilities therefore reduces commissioning costs such as home to school transport costs and the costs associated with out of area placements.

Effect on other Schools, Academies and Educational Institutions in the Area

The proposal is anticipated to have positive implications for other schools, academies and educational institutions in the area.

Increased local ASD capacity will ensure that pupils are placed appropriately and that children, for whom it has been identified that a mainstream place is not appropriate, will not be retained in that setting due to lack of capacity in the SEN sector. This will ensure schools and academies can allocate resources more effectively and that school rolls are reflective of the provision and support an individual mainstream school can offer.

Project Costs

The capital costs associated with the development of the Unit, as well as increasing the school's wider ability to respond to pupil SEN needs, are contained within a capital project budget. The current estimate for development works is £0.650m.

Pupil Numbers and Admissions

The unit will have the capacity to provide 16 places for local pupils. All pupils will be in receipt of an Education, Health and Care Plan that names Mill Hill Primary School as a suitable setting to meet their educational needs. Places will be allocated by Together for Children's SEN placement panel.

Displaced Pupils

The proposal will not result in displaced pupils. It will ensure that pupils that require a SEN provision but who have historically had to travel outside their home localities to access an appropriate school place can be accommodated at a setting that is near their home.

The development will use surplus class bases at Mill Hill Primary School so there will not be a reduction in either the availability of mainstream places or the level of support that is available to the current non-SEN cohort.

The development will also provide wider specialist facilities that can be accessed by the school's mainstream pupils who may have extra support needs but who do not need a SEN school place should that be identified as appropriate. Areas that may be used by the wider cohort include sensory therapy, calming or group areas.

Pupils accessing the main ASD provision will be those who have been identified by an Education, Health and Care Plan Placement Panel as requiring that provision. Mainstream school placements will have been considered unsuitable to meet the needs of pupils. On that

basis there is no displacement associated with the delivery of a SEN unit at Mill Hill Primary School.

Impact on the Community

Wider positive impacts will come from the development of locality provision. Specifically, the ability for young people from South Sunderland to access a site for an ASD placement that enables them to continue to attend a school place near their home without excessive travel.

Balance of Denominational Provision

There will be no impact on the balance of denominational provision as the school does not have a religious character.

Special Educational Needs Provision (SEND)

The proposal will deliver an ASD unit within Mill Hill Primary School's site. This provision will be for primary aged children with the majority who will attend the unit living in the South Sunderland area. It responds to the need for additional ASD places in the city, the ambition to ensure there is appropriate local provision for pupils and utilises the expertise of Mill Hill Primary School in providing for this cohort.

Travel

There would be significant decrease in car use because of these proposals. The delivery of locality sites will enable pupils to access provision nearer to their homes. This will reduce both the period spent travelling to and from provision and the costs associated with that travel.

Consultation

An informal (pre-publication) consultation upon the proposals took place during the following dates:

- 10th November 2023 – 22nd December 2023

Consultees recommended in the relevant statutory guidance were consulted via a Consultation Document that was made widely available on the Council's website and the website of Mill Hill Primary School.

The consultation received 53 responses. Of these:-

- 49 (92%) of the respondents to the question '*Do you agree with the proposal to create a resourced provision for primary aged children with special educational needs relating to Autism at Mill Hill Primary School?*' supported the Council's proposal.

Submission of Objections and Comments on the Proposal

A copy of this proposal can be viewed on the Sunderland City Council website at

<https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/13038/School-organisation-consultations>

It can also be requested via:

E-mail: alan.rowan@togetherforchildren.org.uk

Post: Sufficiency and Capital Lead, Together for Children, City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland, SR1 3AA.

Within four weeks of the Publication Date below, any person may object to or make comments on the proposals by sending their written representations:

By e-mail to: -

schoolorganisation@sunderland.gov.uk

Or by post to: -

Alan Rowan

Sufficiency and Capital Lead

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City Hall,

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SR1 3AA

Signed: Patrick Melia,
Chief Executive,
Sunderland City Council.

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