



Report for Leader Decision (Education & Children's Services portfolio)

Decision Date:	21 December 2023
Reference number:	EC09.23
Title:	Proposal to open a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Unit at Juniper Hill School and to close the Physical Disability (PD) Additional Resource Provision (ARP).
Cabinet Member(s):	Cllr Anita Cranmer
Contact officer:	Paula Campbell-Balcombe
Ward(s) affected:	Flackwell Heath, Little Marlow & Marlow South East
Recommendations:	The Leader is recommended to approve the proposal to open a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Unit at Juniper Hill School and to Close the Physical Disability (PD) Additional Resource Provision (ARP) from 1st September 2024.
Reason for decision:	As part of the Sufficiency Strategy for pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) the need for new inclusion units was identified. This proposal would see the opening of a new 12 place SEMH Unit at Juniper Hill School. In addition, demand for PD ARPs has declined over the years as more schools have become more able to accommodate pupils with physical disabilities. As a result there is no longer a need for a PD ARP at Juniper Hill school.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 As part of the SEND Sufficiency Strategy for Buckinghamshire (see link:[https://buckinghamshire.gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/GD000712_SEND_Education_Sufficiency_Strategy_v5_web.pdf](https://buckinghamshire.gov.uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/GD000712_SEND_Education_Sufficiency_Strategy_v5_web.pdf)) the need for two x 12 place primary age inclusion units for children with SEMH needs at two mainstream schools was identified.
- 1.2 One of the key aims of the Unit is to enable pupils to access a mainstream offer, whilst accessing specific specialist support for their communication and interactions. Without such provision, historically, there have been increased requests from families to attend special schools both within and outside of Buckinghamshire. We know that outcomes for children with special educational needs attending Buckinghamshire mainstream schools are strong, where this can be enabled, and so a key aim of creating more of this provision in the local area will be to increase parental confidence in the offer available. This also means that the spaces in Buckinghamshire special schools are reserved for those children that really need it, ensuring capacity is appropriately distributed to meet the needs of Buckinghamshire children, in line with the SEND Sufficiency Strategy.
- 1.3 Officers have been exploring options with a number of schools to find schools that are suitable and willing to consider providing a Unit on their school site. Juniper Hill School came forward and expressed an interest in providing a SEMH Unit and a feasibility study has been undertaken. The school is located in the Wycombe area where projections formulated within the SEND Sufficiency Strategy show increasing need in this area is coming through.
- 1.4 In addition to the proposal to open a new SEND Unit, it is proposed to withdraw the ARP for pupils with a physical disability.
- 1.5 The School's PD ARP has a very low numbers of pupils (the school currently has 3 pupils in the ARP). 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 is considered that a PD ARP is no longer required at the school.
- 1.6 **Following analysis of the responses from the informal and statutory consultations the Leader, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education & Childrens Services, is recommended to approve the opening of the new SEMH Unit and closure of the PD ARP from 1st September 2024.**

2. Content of report

2.1 Need for SEMH Unit

- 2.2 Over the last five years, the number of 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.
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 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 needs at a school to serve the Wycombe and Aylesbury area which have the highest incident of need.
- 2.5 To help meet this demand, we are proposing to open 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.
- 2.6 The 12 places would be in addition to in the existing school pupil numbers of 420.
- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 **Closure of the PD ARP**
- 2.11 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 3 pupils attending the Juniper Hill ARP.

- 2.12 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.
- 2.13 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 PD ARP was no longer required at the school.
- 2.14 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.

3. Other options considered

- 3.1 The Local Authority is currently exploring a number of options to provide additional SEND places across the County to meet the increased demand for places. This proposal is one of a number that the Education Service is seeking to take forward in order to meet the Council's statutory duty and is in line with the Council's published SEND Sufficiency Strategy.
- 3.2 In relation to the ARP provision the only alternative option would be for it to remain open. However, in view of the reduction in the number of pupils attending the ARP it is no longer required. Pupils with a physical disability will still be able to attend the school and will be provided with all the support they require.
- 3.3 With regards to the provision of the new SEMH Unit, the only other option would be to do nothing but this would not be in line with the Council's Sufficiency Strategy and vital new places would not be provided for young people.

4. Legal and financial implications

- 4.1 In taking forward this proposal Buckinghamshire Council has complied with all applicable statutory requirements in accordance with section 15 and 19 of the Education and Inspections Act.

- 4.2 The LA is the decision maker on any proposals to establish/remove/alter SEND provision at an LA maintained school, which Juniper Hill School is.
- 4.3 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.
- 4.4 Planning consent for the building was granted on 28th September 2023. If this proposal is approved building works will commence on site in February 2024 with a view to the new building being completed by August 2024, ready for occupation in September 2024.
- 4.5 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.
- 4.6 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.

5. Corporate implications

- 5.1 This section will need to include the relevant corporate plan priority relating to this report and make reference to any other implication that need to be taken into account such as:
 - a) Corporate Plan – the proposal is in line with the key priorities set out within Buckinghamshire's SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2022-27 (https://buckinghamshire.gov-uk.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/GD000712_SEND_Education_Sufficiency_Strategy_v5_web.pdf) which identified the need for two x 12 place primary age inclusion units for children with SEMH needs at two mainstream schools.
 - b) Property – it is proposed to build a new Unit within the school grounds which will be funded by Government High Needs Provision Capital Allocations (HNPCA) to support the national growth in demand for High Needs provision.
 - c) HR – 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.

- d) An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the consultation and decision making process. The proposal to open a new SEMH Unit at the school will provide much needed additional SEND places thereby benefiting local children. With regards to the closure of the PD ARP, whilst we are aware that there may be a perceived negative impact for pupils within the existing ARP, mitigation will be put in place to ensure that the educational needs of the pupils currently in the ARP will continue to be met and that they are not disadvantaged by this proposal.
- e) Value for money: the proposal offers good value for money as by providing local places within our mainstream schools we enable children with special educational needs to be educated within, and closer to, their local communities. Such local provision not only provides better outcomes for children but prevents the need for placements in special schools or independent special schools which would result in significant additional financial demand on the Authority.

6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 As part of the statutory process on the proposal two consultation stages were undertaken. A summary of both of consultation stage responses is provided within this paper and more detailed responses are provided in ANNEX C and D

6.2 Stage 1 Consultation

6.3 The first stage consultation process on the Proposal to open a 12 place SEMH Unit at Juniper Hill School and to close the PD ARP at Juniper Hill School commenced on 5th June 2023 and concluded on Sunday 16th July 2023. In line with statutory requirements the consultation letter (see ANNEX A) was sent to the following consultees and also promoted via a dedicated webpage and survey on Your Voice B:

Consultees
• Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services
• Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services
• The Leader of the Council
• Forward plan

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Councillors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cllr David Johncock ○ Cllr Jocelyn Towns ○ Cllr David Watson
• Local schools
• Special Schools
• FACT Bucks
• Local MP – Joy Morrissey
• LA Staff
• Teaching associations and Unison
• RC and ODB boards
• Parish/Town council
• DfE
• Parents/carers
• PTFA/Friends
• School staff
• Community groups
• Residents near to school
• Any groups that use school premises
• Village/Town groups
• Pre-school/child minders
• School council
• Local Church/Mosque/Iman

- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 The second, a drop in session for the wider public/local residents, was held at the school on Tuesday 20th 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.
- 6.6 **First Stage Consultation Outcome**
- 6.7 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.
- 6.8 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.

- 6.9 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.

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

- 6.10 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.
- 6.11 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.
- 6.12 See ANNEX C for full details of the Stage One Consultation Responses.
- 6.13 **Stage 2 Representation Period – Publication of Statutory Proposal**
- 6.14 The second stage, Statutory Proposal, consultation process 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 13th October 2023 and concluded on 9th November 2023. In line with statutory requirements the consultation letter (see ANNEX B) was sent to the following consultees and also promoted via a dedicated webpage and survey on Your Voice Bucks:

Consultees
• Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services
• Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services
• The Leader of the Council
• Forward plan
• Local Councillors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cllr David Johncock ○ Cllr Jocelyn Towns ○ Cllr David Watson
• Local schools
• Special Schools
• FACT Bucks
• Local MP – Joy Morrissey
• LA Staff

• Teaching associations and Unison
• RC and ODB boards
• Parish/Town Council
• DfE
• Parents/carers
• PTFA/Friends
• School staff
• Community groups
• Residents near to school
• Any groups that use school premises
• Village/Town groups
• Pre-school/child minders
• School council
• Local Church/Mosque/Iman

6.15 In taking forward this proposal Buckinghamshire Council has complied with all applicable statutory requirements in accordance with section 15 and 19 of the Education and Inspections Act.

6.16 **Second Stage Consultation Outcome**

6.17 The Council received 29 responses to the consultation proposal. 25 of these came in via the Your Voice consultation page and 4 came to the consultation mailbox or by post to the School Commissioning Team.

6.18 In summary of the 29 who responded 24 (83%) were in agreement with the proposal to open an SEMH UNIT; 3 (10%) did not agree; and 2 (7%) didn't know or didn't say.

6.19 Of the 29 who responded to the proposal to close the PD ARP; 16 (55%) agreed with the proposal; 5 (17%) disagreed; and 8 (28%) didn't know or didn't say.

Agree/Disagree to the proposal to open an SEMH Unit and close the PD ARP				
	Yes	No	Don't Know/Didn't say	TOTAL
Open SEMH Unit	24	3	2	29
Close PD Unit	16	5	8	29

6.20 In terms of the respondents to the consultation, respondents were asked to state who they were responding to the consultation. Table 1 below shows how responses were broken down by each category.



6.21 In terms of the respondents to the consultation, respondents were asked to state who they were responding to the consultation as Respondents could select multiple options and therefore the total for 'who' (35) is greater than the number of responses (29). For example, a respondent could be a parent, trustee and live near the school. Table 1 below shows how responses were broken down by each category.

TABLE 1: Who responded?	
Who - Respondents could select multiple options and therefore the total for 'who' is greater than the number of responses (30).	
Buckinghamshire Council Employee	0
Staff Member at Juniper Hill School	18
Governor at Juniper Hill School	0
Parent at Juniper Hill School	4
Local Resident/live near MT - (may also be parent/staff etc so some duplication)	10
MP/Cllr	0
Work at another local school	2
Other	0
Represent community group	1
	35

Table 2 below shows responses by each category to the proposal to open and SEMH Unit at the school.

TABLE 2: Question: Do you agree with the proposal to open an SEMH Unit?	
Staff/Governor	Number
Yes	18
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
Parent	
Yes	2
No	2
Don't know/didn't say	0
Work at another school	
Yes	1
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	1
Community/Voluntary Group	
Yes	1

No	0
Didn't know/didn't say	0
Local Resident	
Yes	7
No	2
Don't know/didn't say	1
BC Employee	
Yes	0
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
Other	
Yes	0
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0

Table 3 below shows responses by each category to the proposal to close the PD ARP at the school.

TABLE 3: Question: Do you agree with the proposal to close the PD ARP?	
Staff/Governor	Number
Yes	15
No	1
Don't know/didn't say	2
Parent	
Yes	0
No	2
Don't know/didn't say	2
Work at another school	
Yes	0
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	2
Community/Voluntary Group	
Yes	1
No	0
Didn't know/didn't say	0
Local Resident	
Yes	4
No	3
Don't know/didn't say	3
BC Employee	

Yes	0
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
Other	
Yes	0
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0

- 6.22 From the tables above it can be noted that the majority of those objecting to the proposal to open an SEMH Unit are parents (2) and local residents (2). However, it should be noted that this is a very low opposition rate. Of those who objected the concerns for the most part were concerned about existing traffic issues around the school and the impact an additional 12 pupils might have on traffic.
- 6.23 There was relatively low level objection to the proposed closure of the ARP with the most objections (3) coming from local residents.
- 6.24 The parents/carers who responded to the consultation to open an SEMH Unit were evenly split in their responses with 2 in favour and 2 against. Of those who were against the proposal, the impact of the Unit on traffic was mentioned as was the impact the unit may have on the rest of the school.
- 6.25 Of the parents that responded on the closure of the ARP, 2 were against the closure and 2 didn't know/or didn't say. Of those who made a comment parents felt there was a need for ARP provision for pupils with a physical disability. As was set out in the consultation documents, whilst it is proposed to close the ARP the school will continue to admit children with a physical disability and pupils (current and future) will continue to receive the same level of support as they do now.
- 6.26 No response was received from any elected Members or representatives of a Parish/Town Council.
- 6.27 See ANNEX D for full details of the Stage Two Statutory Consultation Responses
- 6.28 An email was sent on 4th December 2023 to the local Councillors, who had previously been briefed on the proposal, asking if they wished to add any further comments to the paper.
- 6.29 Cllr Johncock responded as follows: "I have been in close contact with the school and parents on this topic throughout the planning process and the public consultation and I am fully in support of the proposal".
- 6.30 Cllr Towns responded on 5th December stating that she was also supportive.

7. Communication, engagement & further consultation

- 7.1 Please refer to Section 6 above and Annexes A - D for full details of the consultation process that has been undertaken.
- 7.2 As noted in the section above, the proposal has been widely consulted upon and has followed the DfE guidance.
- 7.3 Once the decision is taken as to whether to open a SEMH Unit at Juniper Hill School and to close the PDARP all relevant parties will be formally notified of the decision and Officers from the Council will continue to work with the School to ensure that full support is provided to deliver the proposal.

8. Next steps and review

- 8.1 If the recommendation is supported by the Leader of the Council, the construction building works contract will be let such that works can commence on site in February with a view to completing by August 2024 such that the new Unit can open in September 2024.

9. Background papers

- 9.1 It is a legal requirement to make available background papers relied on to prepare a report and these should be listed at the end of the report (copies of background papers for executive decisions must be provided to democratic services). **Hyperlinks to papers published online should be used where possible. Where there are no background papers, insert none.**
- 9.2 Annex A: Consultation documents June 2023 [Proposals for Juniper Hill School, Flackwell Heath - Your Voice Bucks - Citizen Space](#)
- 9.3 Annex B: Consultation documents October 2023 [Statutory notice for proposals at Juniper Hill School, Flackwell Heath - Your Voice Bucks - Citizen Space](#)
- 9.4 Annex C: Stage One Consultation Report
- 9.5 Annex D: Stage Two Statutory Proposal Outcome Report

10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider, please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by email to democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk.