



# Stage 1 Consultation Report on a 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).

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**Date: 19<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

## First Stage Consultation Process

### 1.1 Recommendation

1.2 **In view of the responses received, as set out below, and the fact that there was slightly more support to the proposals than opposition it is recommended that the Council moves forward with the publication of the Statutory Notice proposing the opening of an Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Unit at Juniper Hill School and the closure of the Additionally Resourced Provision for pupils with a Physical Disability (PD).**

1.3 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 (see APPENDIX 1) 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"><li>○ Cllr David Johncock</li><li>○ Cllr Jocelyn Towns</li><li>○ Cllr David Watson</li></ul>
• 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

- 1.4 An email was sent by Simon James, Service Director Education, to the three local councillors on the morning of 5<sup>th</sup> June ahead of the consultation going live later that day in order to ensure that they were briefed on the proposal. Cllr Johncock responded to the email to check that the school were supportive of the proposal and whether the proposal would involve new buildings. A response was sent back to Cllr Johncock confirming that the school were fully supportive of the proposal and that if the plans proceed a new SEMH Unit will be built at the school (subject to all necessary planning consents being provided).
- 1.5 Following receipt of the email from Simon James, Cllr Johncock made contact with the school and arranged to visit them on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> June. He met with the Head teacher who talked him through the plans, showed him the site and confirmed that the school were fully supportive of the proposal. Cllr Johncock confirmed to the headteacher that he was very supportive of the proposal.
- 1.6 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.
- 1.7 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.

### **First Stage Consultation Outcome**

- 1.8 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.
- 1.9 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.

- 1.10 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

- 1.11 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.

- 1.12 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

- 1.13 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' is greater than the number of responses (38). 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?**

<b>Who - Respondents could select multiple options and therefore the total for 'who' is greater than the number of responses (30).</b>	
Buckinghamshire Council Employee	1
Staff Member at Juniper Hill School	0
Governor at Juniper Hill School	1
Parent at Juniper Hill School	12

Local Resident/live near MT - (may also be parent/staff etc so some duplication)	16
MP/CIr	0
Work at another local school	5
Other	2
Represent community group	1
	<b>38</b>

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

<b>TABLE 2: Question: Do you agree with the proposal to open an SEMH Unit?</b>	
<b>Staff/Governor</b>	<b>Number</b>
Yes	1
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
<b>Parent</b>	
Yes	7
No	5
Don't know/didn't say	0
<b>Work at another school</b>	
Yes	3
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	2
<b>Community/Voluntary Group</b>	
Yes	1
No	0
Didn't know/didn't say	0
<b>Local Resident</b>	
Yes	8
No	8
Don't know/didn't say	0
<b>BC Employee</b>	
Yes	1
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
<b>Other</b>	
Yes	2
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.

<b>TABLE 3: Question: Do you agree with the proposal to close the PD ARP?</b>	
<b>Staff/Governor</b>	<b>Number</b>
Yes	1
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
<b>Parent</b>	
Yes	8
No	2
Don't know/didn't say	2
<b>Work at another school</b>	
Yes	4
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	1
<b>Community/Voluntary Group</b>	
Yes	1
No	0
Didn't know/didn't say	0
<b>Local Resident</b>	
Yes	9
No	5
Don't know/didn't say	2
<b>BC Employee</b>	
Yes	1
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0
<b>Other</b>	
Yes	2
No	0
Don't know/didn't say	0

- 1.14 From the tables above it can be noted that the majority of those objecting to the proposal to open an SEMH Unit are local residents (8) who for the most part were concerned about existing traffic issues around the school and the impact an additional 12 pupils might have on traffic. There was relatively low level objection to the proposed closure of the ARP with the most objections (5) coming from local residents.
- 1.15 The parents/carers who responded to the consultation to open an SEMH Unit were fairly evenly split in their responses with 7 in favour and 5 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. Of the parents that responded on the closure of the ARP the majority (8 out of the 12 respondents) were supportive of the proposal.

- 1.16 Of the respondents who disagreed with the proposal and made further comments, the main concerns/issues raised were:

**Comments Submitted against the proposal:**

- *This would completely change the dynamics of this school's culture.*
- **Response: Juniper is a highly inclusive nurturing school. They see every individual child. Children are at the heart of all they do. The Juniper Team have received training on how to support children with SEMH needs. The Unit would be an extension of what they already do as a school. Children who have experienced ACE's (Adverse Childhood Experiences) can sometimes find a mainstream classroom environment challenging, they need different routines and structures. Having the Unit enables the school to provide a bespoke differentiated curriculum, where the children can experience success.**
- *Currently parking is very bad in the local streets and I feel often inconsiderate and dangerous for children on foot and for local residents. The children attending the unit would presumably be arriving in individual taxis. Every week we are rightly reminded of the immense problems that the school faces with cars close to the school and the danger that vehicle traffic on Churchill Close poses to pupils. The school is not well suited to having up to 12 taxis racing up to the school twice a day. This is at complete odds, I feel, with the school travel plan. It is a risk to the safety of the existing children. The infrastructure (road access, traffic congestion & parking) cannot support the current activities of the school. On top come the high number of third party activities operated on the school premises outside of school hours including evenings & weekends. Residents can no longer park outside of their houses, are asked to move their cars & cones are placed blocking their access without legal jurisdiction.*

**Response: Some of the children might arrive by taxi. To eliminate the turning of taxis during drop-off and pick-up times and in order to minimise any potential impact of this proposal the school will implement different start and finish times for the Unit. The School's current start and finish times are 8.45am – 3.30pm. It is proposed that the start and finish times for the new Unit would be 08:30am arrival and 15:15 departure. Having different start and finish times for the children in our SEMH 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 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 school is seeking to appoint a Crossing Patrol Person who will start working at the school imminently which will be of huge assistance to parents and pupils and will improve safety for pupils needing to cross roads to access the school.

The School is also working with the Local Council and Football Association on a plan to use the local Football Club carpark on Green Dragon Lane, for parents to park at drop off and pick up. The Council have recently installed a pedestrian gate, completed risk assessments and installed the lines and signs needed to facilitate this proposal. The School is committed to trying to reduce the traffic around the school. Once the Crossing Patrol Person has started, the School will encourage parents to park at the Football Club and walk. As an incentive the School will reward pupils who utilise this facility.

- *Will there be a plan for managing building site traffic coming in and off site in an already congested area and has consideration been given to how building site noise and disruption will impact children attending school.*
- **Response: The appointed contractor will need to submit a Traffic Management Plan setting out how traffic will be managed in order to minimise the impact on the school. Deliveries will be timed outside of morning and afternoon drop off/pick up to avoid congestion. In addition the contractor will need to sign up the Considerate Contractor Scheme to ensure that their works have minimal impact on the school and local residents.**
- *Not enough information has been shared on when the children will join the school day and for how long to understand impact to children already attending.*
- **Response: the needs of each child will be different and therefore integration within the main school will be undertaken on a case by case basis for each child as and when appropriate.**
- *Loss of playing field space. The proposed design would reduce the amount of outdoor playing space available for existing pupils. This is surely at odds with local and national initiatives to encourage children to exercise outdoors as much as possible.*
- **Response: the proposed Unit is to be located on the site of the former outdoor swimming pool. Due to the poor condition of the land in this area the school do not**

allow pupils to go on this land. The School has good sized grounds and the loss of this space will have no detrimental impact on pupils as it is not currently in use.

- *Loss of focus on existing children's needs. There is next to no focus on maximising attainment currently (such as a gifted and talented programme). For instance, I have been repeatedly told that my son is excellent in terms of his reading ability but that the school is not resourced to stretch him any further. Teachers are understandably busy and lack the time to focus on able pupils. Yet now the school is resourced to focus on a unit that at most will benefit 12 children and will reduce focus on the school's existing pupils. I fail to see any benefit to the existing pupils, to whom the school owes a duty of care, only disadvantages.*
- **Response: The new SEMH children will be predominately taught in the Unit. They will only access lessons they can experience success in. There won't be a reduced focus on the School's existing pupils. There are many benefits of opening the unit for existing pupils. The School Development Plan has identified the training needs for the staff, all children will benefit. There are a number of children at Juniper that have a lower level of SEMH needs that the staff will now understand more and be able to support.**

The school is good at challenging and stretching the more able children, in all areas of the school, e.g. sport, music and academic performance. The school successfully meets the needs of ALL pupils.

- *Concerns about the safety of integration of the SEMH children with the existing pupils. I attended a primary school with a unit very similar to the proposed SEMH unit. Playtimes were plagued by poor behaviour from a minority of children with outbreaks of violence and bad language. I am concerned that the pupils attending the SEMH unit will cause similar problems for Juniper Hill children, all while disproportionately consuming the valuable time of the existing teaching staff (which we have been told previously is in short supply).*
- **Response: The Unit will have its own dedicated outside area and pupils attending the Unit will only integrate with the rest of the school as and when it is felt appropriate. Behaviour of pupils will be closely monitored to ensure where integration is undertaken pupils do not disrupt other students. The integration of individual pupils will be kept under close review and control. The Unit will have its own dedicated staff and therefore will have no impact on existing staff or their resource.**

1.17 Of the respondents who agree with the proposal to open an SEMH Unit at the school and made further comments, the main comments raised were:

- *Working in a school with Autistic children, I understand how valuable a resource like this could be for lots of children. It could be life changing.*



- *Brilliant idea, there are more children with additional needs coming through the doors and schools need to facilitate to their needs and have staff who have the correct training.*
- *I am a foster carer. I have real empathy with families with SEM complexities. Juniper Hill (with Mrs Garnett and Mrs Williams onboard ) would be a great base.*
- *There is a clear identified need for this type of specialist provision, and linking it to a mainstream school sounds highly appropriate.*
- *I am aware of the need for such a resource through my work. Juniper Hill is a supportive and nurturing school.*
- *With a dramatic increase in the number of pupils needs SEMH support, I think it is important that specific provision is created within the education sector to enable them to flourish.*
- *Firstly the county would not be suggesting this if there wasn't a need for it. Juniper Hill is a progressive school always thinking and planning ahead, It is well managed and the SEN Department is excellent. If a Unit is to open anywhere then this gets my vote. However I would hope it doesn't have as big an impact on the School as the ARP does at the moment. If children are not suited to mainstream education then they need specialist care and help and this should not be putting the education of 29 others in jeopardy. The Unit will hopefully not become an extra drain on staff in fulltime classrooms or their TA's.*
- *With a dramatic increase in the number of pupils needs SEMH support, I think it is important that specific provision is created within the education sector to enable them to flourish.*
- *There are too many SEMH children in mainstream schools at the moment, a dedicated unit with access to mainstream provision when appropriate is well overdue.*

1.18 Of the respondents who disagreed with the proposal to close the PD ARP or said they didn't know and made further comments, the main concerns/issues raised were:

**Comments Submitted against the proposal:**

- *I think it is foolish just to predict this decline will continue. Even though many schools are more disabled friendly, specialised provision is still needed for children with physical disabilities.*
- *I believe it is absolutely necessary to support such children*
- *Where will children with these needs now go?*
- *I understand if there is no need for this provision that it would need to close. However, if there are still pupils with this need, what happens to them?*

- **Response:** 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. 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.

1.19 Of the respondents who agree with the proposal to close the PD ARP at the school and made further comments, the main comments raised were:

- *I would imagine everything has been considered not least the welfare of the children coming there.*
- *It is not viable anymore*

1.20 No elected representative for Buckinghamshire submitted a response.

1.21 Having analysed the consultation responses received on the proposal to open an SEMH Unit and close the PD ARP at the school, whilst the overall response rate was quite low, on the whole there is more support for the proposals than opposition and most of the objection to the new Unit relates to existing traffic issues rather than the opening of a new Unit in itself. The number of responses was relatively low (despite being publicised through a variety of channels in line with statutory guidance)

1.22 **In view of the responses received and the fact that there was slightly more support to the proposals than opposition it is recommended that the Council moves forward with the publication of the Statutory Notice proposing the opening of an SEMH Unit at Juniper Hill School and the closure of the PD ARP.**