



**Hertfordshire County Council
County Hall
Hertford
SG13 8DF**

Tel: 0300 123 4043
Fax:
E Mail: education.planning@hertfordshire.gov.uk
Postal Point: CHO136
My ref: School Planning
Your ref:
Date: 5 January 2021

Dear Consultee

Consultation on a proposal to open a ‘Specialist Resource Provision’ (SRP) at The Priory School (the School), Hitchin, from September 2022.

Hertfordshire County Council is consulting you on a proposal to develop a Specialist Resource Provision at The Priory School, a foundation school, for up to 20 pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with social communication difficulties, including autism.

Hertfordshire County Council is developing SRPs at a range of mainstream schools across the County. The aim is to have four SRPs at secondary schools and a further eight at primary schools, spread equitably across the County, delivered in phases, starting with the secondary sector. Secondary SRPs are also being proposed at the following schools:

- Bushey Meads School in Bushey;
- Longdean School in Hemel Hempstead; and
- The new Avanti Schools Trust secondary school in Bishop’s Stortford.

Why is this being proposed?

There are an increasing number of pupils with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) who have a broader and more complex level of need, including autism and social communication difficulties, that cannot be met in the existing provision. This means that more children are being placed in independent specialist provision or, unnecessarily, in special schools. The pupils with this broader and more

complex need have difficulties with communication, social relationships and managing a busy school environment. This often leads to anxiety and disengagement, or inappropriate coping strategies, including 'shutting down'. These pupils need access to a mainstream curriculum and academic challenge, balanced with a safe space to be in, where work can be done to support self-regulation, build resilience and protect emotional wellbeing.

This has led to the proposal to develop a pattern of SRPs across the County, for pupils with social communication difficulties, including autism.

What will the SRPs do?

The vision is that, through short and appropriate intervention, the self-esteem of these pupils can be developed. They would be kept well emotionally and supported to reach their academic potential.

It is proposed that each secondary SRP will provide up to 20 places. The pupils will be on the roll of the school and will form part of any statutory returns required from maintained schools, including key stage results. The provision will form part of any Ofsted inspection.

The SRP will be a centre of excellence for pupils with social communication difficulties, including autism. The SRP will:

- be an important part of Hertfordshire County Council's graduated approach to meeting needs locally;
- meet the needs of pupils within the provision, providing personalised support to enable them to make good progress in all areas of their development;
- build capacity across the School, ensuring that all staff have the skills and expertise to meet the needs of the pupils when they are accessing the wider school curriculum;
- work with other schools across the North Hertfordshire and Stevenage area to support meeting these types of needs and improving outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

Why do the Governing Body of The Priory School have an interest in developing an SRP at the School?

The Priory School believes that every student should have the opportunity to attend a fully inclusive school; a school that believes the key to success is to have high expectations for all and the desire to understand the individual needs of every student. The School aims to ensure that each student achieves their potential in all aspects of their learning and personal development and is ready to successfully move on to the next stage of their lives. The School is a beacon of best practice in the area and already works very closely with primary and secondary settings, as well as further education colleges, to improve transition and the entitlement of students with SEND.

The School is inventive in its approach to learning and has integrated blended learning as a core part of its offer. This has resulted in a positive impact on many of the students, especially those with a range of additional needs, making use of technology that allows them to gradually and successfully reintegrate into the classroom.

The School has an imaginative raising-aspirations programme that runs throughout the young people's learning journey with us and focusses on preparing for adulthood, improving students' skills and opening their minds to different possibilities. The School believes that this opportunity is vital for lifelong success and should be available to all students.

What does this mean for pupils?

The SRP will have clear admission and exit guidance. To be admitted to the SRP, a child must have an EHCP and will have social communication difficulties, including autism. They will have needs greater than, or additional to, the needs that can normally be met through full time attendance at a mainstream school. The school will be named in the child's EHCP. Admission to the SRP will be distinct from the School's general admissions process.

From time to time, pupils based in the SRP would join sessions in the main school with their age group peers. Typically, these pupils would be supported by specialist staff from the SRP.

Other pupils at the School who are not in the SRP, but who have social communication difficulties, including autism, would benefit from main school staff working alongside specialist colleagues. However, access to SRP staff and resources would only be through admission to the SRP.

What would be the impact on staff?

The Headteacher will keep a strategic overview of the SRP, including staff recruitment, training and retention. It is expected that the Headteacher or other senior leader will be the line manager for the SRP Leader.

The County Council have developed a full staff training and development programme to ensure consistency of offer across the four secondary schools who are developing SRP provision.

Have your say

You have until 1 February 2021 to let us know your views. The easiest way you can do this is by completing the online response form on our website:

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/consultations.

If you do not have access to the internet you can visit your local library where free access is available to all Hertfordshire residents¹. Staff at libraries can print off and supply consultation documents if requested to.

Should you wish to request a hard copy of the response form or need help understanding this information you can email: education.planning@hertfordshire.gov.uk or alternatively please call us on 0300 123 4043. An interpreting service is available for those who need it.

Your comments must be received by 1 February 2021. We will not be able to acknowledge or respond individually to your comments, but they will be taken into account as explained below.

How the decision will be taken

This is a consultation and no decision has been made yet. All comments received to this consultation will be made available to elected members of Hertfordshire County Council. All responses may be made available in public reports, although personal details will be removed to respect individual privacy.

The following timetable outlines the decision-making process. Please note that meetings marked with * are meetings in public. Although it will not be possible to inform everyone individually of the decisions made, you will be able to access this information throughout the process at: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/committees.

Public consultation	5 January - 1 February 2021
Children, Young People & Families Cabinet Panel*	15 March 2021
Cabinet* To consider the outcome of public consultation and to decide whether to publish a statutory notice	22 March 2021
County Council publication of statutory notice	10 May - 6 June 2021
Delegated decision if no objections to the statutory notice	28 June 2021
or Cabinet* decision if objections to the statutory notice	12 July 2021

Yours faithfully



Jenny Coles
Director of Children's Services

¹ Please note that during current Covid-19 conditions, access to libraries may not be available. Best endeavours will be used to publicise the proposal as widely as possible.