

**From:** Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education and Young People's Services

**To:** Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

**Subject:** Proposal to establish a Specialist Resource Base Provision for students with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education and Health Care Plan equivalent for Autistic Spectrum Disorder at Hugh Christie Technology College.

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Committee -13 October 2014 and Cabinet Committee – 15 April 2015

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member decision

**Electoral Division:** Tonbridge, Richard Long and Chris Smith

**Summary:** This report sets out the results of the public consultation on the proposal to establish a Specialist Resource Base Provision at Hugh Christie Technology College, White Cottage Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PU for students with a statement of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plan equivalent for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

**Recommendation(s):** The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to agree to:

- (i) Issue a public notice to establish a new Specialist Resource Base Provision (SRBP) within Hugh Christie Technology College, White Cottage Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PU for pupils with a statement of Special Educational Needs or Education, Health and Care Plan equivalent for ASD for September 2015
- (ii) And, subject to no objections not already considered, implement the proposal for September 2015

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent County Council's Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and who are Disabled (SEND) identified the need to add additional provision across the county. The SEND Strategy shows how we will create 164 extra 'specialist resource base' places in mainstream schools.
- 1.2 A number of students have Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) or Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) which are legal documents that describe the help given to students who have the greatest difficulty learning. They require higher levels of support than can be provided in their local mainstream schools, but their needs are not so complex that Special School placements are needed.

For these students we maintain a range of Specialist Resource Base Provisions (SRBP) which are based in mainstream schools with places reserved for students with statements of SEN or EHCP equivalent.

- 1.3 The number of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) need type has increased significantly over recent years. From 2010 – 2014 numbers have increased by 65% and ASD remains the most prevalent need type in Kent. The Kent Commissioning Plan 2015-19 sets out our intention to create additional provision to support those students. We are providing additional Primary SRBPs in the six new Primary Schools that are proposed to open in September 2015.
- 1.4 For Secondary provision, we continue to closely monitor the impact of specialist SEN Primary provision on individual students' needs to identify whether continuity of provision is necessary. For many students appropriate early intervention and suitable placement at Primary School will mean that at Secondary age, their needs can be met in their local Secondary School.
- 1.5 We are already aware of some pressure at Secondary age within our Special Schools and the Secondary forecasts indicate that there will be significant pressure on Secondary school places from 2018/19 onwards. SEN pupils typically represent 2.8% of the wider population, although the percentage in mainstream schools is approximately 1.3%. We continue to monitor the growth in the Secondary age school population and respond accordingly with new SEN provision where required. We have already created additional provision at the Malling School and Holmesdale Technology College. We are also aware that Leigh Academy Trust propose to establish a Specialist Resource Based Provision for pupils with ASD, at Wilmington Academy, Common Lane, Wilmington, Dartford, Kent, DA2 7DR.
- 1.6 Hugh Christie Technology College is recognised by Ofsted as a good school. Based in Tonbridge with excellent transport links, the school is housed in modern buildings on an attractive campus with excellent facilities for Sport, Performing Arts, Science, Design Technology and ICT. The school has been developing a highly personalised curriculum which aims to provide as much choice as possible over when, where, what and how students learn.
- 1.7 We recognise that the school has invested in developing its staff expertise in ASD to create an ASD friendly environment across the whole school. Therefore, we would like to build upon the existing provision and the school's inclusive approach by establishing a new SRBP for up to 50 students with a statement of SEN or EHCP equivalent for ASD for September 2015.
- 1.8 It is anticipated that the SRBP will initially open with up to 20 students. Those students attending the SRBP at Hugh Christie Technology College would be students who experience difficulty with communicating and interacting with other people but they will be suitable for a mainstream school and capable of achieving good GCSE grades. Students will be able to receive individual and small group teaching and support. They will not spend all of their time in the SRBP but will be integrated into mainstream

classes during the school day, where suitable. The approach will be one which reflects the individual needs of each student.

- 1.9 This recommendation is linked to the proposal to discontinue Furness school and to establish a set provision for Broomhill Bank school on the Furness site. It is recognised that there is an increasing need for a range of ASP provision in West Kent.
- 1.10 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 4 February 2015 and 23 March 2015. A drop-in information session for parents was held on 5 March 2015 at Hugh Christie Technology College.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 This is a proposal to make a prescribed alteration to Hugh Christie Technology College, White Cottage Road, Tonbridge TN10 4PU by creating a Specialist Resource Base Provision for up to 50 students with a statement of SEN or EHCP equivalent for ASD for September 2015.
  - a. It is proposed that Hugh Christie Technology College will reconfigure their existing teaching rooms to make provision for specialist teaching spaces. Therefore, there is no capital cost associated with this proposal.
  - b. Additional funding will be allocated for an agreed number of commissioned places in accordance with the Place Plus High Needs funding methodology.
  - c. Hugh Christie Technology College is happy to host the SRBP and is confident that staff have the relevant expertise and skills to meet the needs of these students. However, the school will appoint additional teachers, as the need arises.

## **3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework**

- 3.1 This proposal will help to secure our ambition “to ensure every child will go to a good school where they make good progress and can have fair access to school places” as set out in ‘Bold Steps for Kent’.
- 3.2 The Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision, 2015-19 has identified the need to add 275 additional SEN places in Kent for pupils with ASD and Behavioural Needs. The SEND Strategy shows how we will create 164 extra ‘resource base’ places in mainstream schools.

## **4. Consultation Outcomes**

- 4.1 KCC recognises the significant importance given to parents’ and carers’ views in the Children and Families Act reforms of SEN and Disabilities which came into force from September 2014. The local authority has sought to ensure they are involved in shaping and influencing strategic decisions that affect their children and young people.

4.2 KCC has recognised that parents of high functioning pupils with autistic spectrum disorder conditions are ambitious for their children and some would like them to be supported in mainstream schools where they have access to high quality subject specialist teachers and access to specialist teaching facilities.

4.3 All applicable statutory requirements to consult in relation to this proposal have been complied with. A public consultation was carried out by KCC from 4 February 2015 to 23 March 2015. A consultation document was produced together with an Equality Impact Assessment which can be obtained from KCC's website. The consultation document was distributed to statutory stakeholders, including but not limited to the following groups:

- The parents of all pupils attending Hugh Christie Technology College, staff and governors
- The Department for Education
- The Diocese of Rochester, Canterbury and Southwark
- Elected Members (Kent County Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough and Parish Councils)
- Local MP
- Trade Unions
- Local Children's Centres and pre-school providers
- Schools in Tonbridge and Malling and Sevenoaks area
- Local Libraries in the Tonbridge and Malling area

All stakeholders were able to access copies of these documents on the KCC website. An opportunity to send in written responses using the response form, email and online was provided. An information drop-in session was also held for parents on 5 March from 5pm – 7pm at Hugh Christie Technology College. Local 'feeder' schools were also notified of this meeting.

4.4 In total 9 responses to the consultation were received. 7 respondents supported the proposal; 2 objected to the proposal. A summary of written comments received is provided at Appendix 1.

## **5. Views**

5.1 Mr Richard Long, the Local Member for Tonbridge fully supports the aim of bringing children and young people on the autistic spectrum where their education will benefit by their being in mainstream education. Mr Long understands that this leaves adequate resources for those whose needs are such that they cannot reasonably access mainstream education; the mixing of young people with a wide diversity of ability and motivation in one school can be achieved in such a way as to allow all pupils to progress at their own best pace; and that this proposal has the broad support of pupils and families.

- 5.2. The Executive Principal Tonbridge Federation has given his full support for the ASD provision as described in the current consultation documentation. He supports the proposal because it further develops the inclusive nature of the school and its success with high functioning ASD children. This has been significant, enabling them to lead happy, successful and independent lives after leaving the school. Many have progressed to University, making their parents very proud of what they have achieved. This proposal will enable Hugh Christie to extend its current provision to enable more children to benefit from the school's expertise.
- 5.3 The Governing Body of the Tonbridge Federation (which includes Hugh Christie) met on Tuesday 3rd February 2015 to discuss the proposals outlined in the public consultation and approved the proposal unanimously. The Governing Body are fully supportive of the proposal because:
- Students would benefit from accessing a mainstream school for the majority of the school day but having the support of trained staff in the Skills Centre.
  - Parents, who would prefer their children accessing mainstream education, will have a greater choice of provision within the West Kent area, currently this is not available.
  - Our school is co-educational meaning we can offer places to both boys and girls with ASD.
  - The school has a strong track record supporting children with ASD and this will enable us to widen and strengthen the provision.
- 5.3 The view of the KCC Head of SEN Assessment and Placement
- Through their children's individual assessments and discussion about placements, a number of parents and carers have asked the Council to provide the broadest range of provision so that they have a choice of a local school. They also wish to ensure the staff in the school have received the training and support needed to understand what can act as a barrier to learning. We recognise that Hugh Christie has invested in increasing the level of expertise of its staff in order to offer a good balance of ambitious academic opportunity and a supportive learning environment for those learners who are capable of achieving examination success but find social situations challenging.
- 5.4 The view of the KCC Area Education Officer:
- The Area Education Officer for West Kent fully supports this proposal as a cost-effective and sustainable approach towards meeting the continuing need for ASD places in West Kent. Hugh Christie Technology College is an inclusive school, which is judged as 'Good' by Ofsted and this SRBP will build upon the success of the school in educating pupils with ASD.

## **6. Proposal**

- 6.1 This proposal is in accordance with Section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Kent County Council intends to make prescribed alterations to Hugh Christie Technology College, White Cottage Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN10 4PU to create a Specialist Resource Based

Provision for 50 pupils with a Statement of Special Educational Needs or Education and Health Care Plan equivalent for ASD.

- 6.2 This proposal is linked to, but not contingent upon, the proposal to discontinue Furness School, Rowhill Road, Swanley, Kent BR8 7RP.
- 6.3 This proposal is subject to KCC statutory decision making process and planning.
- 6.4 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. To date no comments have been received and no changes are required to the Equality Impact Assessment.
- 6.5 There will be no impact on the value of KCC's property portfolio.

## **7. Delegation to Officers**

- 7.1 The Officer Scheme of Delegation; under Appendix 2 part 4 of the Council's Constitution, provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions needed to implement it.

## **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1 This proposal will create an additional 50 places for pupils with ASD, in line with priorities 3, 4 and 9 of 'Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework' and the 'Commissioning Plan for Education – Kent' (2015 – 2019).

## **9. Recommendation(s)**

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- (ii) And, subject to no objections not already considered, implement the proposal for September 2015

## **10. Background Documents**

- 10.1 Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework  
[http://www.kent.gov.uk/your\\_council/priorities,\\_policies\\_and\\_plans/priorities\\_and\\_plans/bold\\_steps\\_for\\_kent.aspx](http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities,_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/bold_steps_for_kent.aspx)
- 10.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2015-19  
[http://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/16236/Commissioning-plan-for-education-provision-in-Kent-2015-2019.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/16236/Commissioning-plan-for-education-provision-in-Kent-2015-2019.pdf)

10.3 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment

[www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations)

10.4 Strategy for Children & Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/childrens-social-care-and-families-policies>

## **11. Contact details**

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**Proposal to create a new Specialist Resource Base Provision (SRBP) within Hugh Christie Technology College, White Cottage Road, Tonbridge, Kent TN10 4PU for up to 50 students with a statement of SEN/EHCP or equivalent for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)**

**Summary of written responses**

Consultation documents (hard copies) distributed: 1500

Responses received: 9

	Support	Against	Undecided	Total
Student	1			
Parents/Carers	3	1		
Governors	1			
Members of Staff				
Member of Staff at another school	1			
Parent at another school		1		
Other	1			
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>2</b>		<b>9</b>

**In support of the proposal**

**Yr 11 Student (HCTC) /Student Leader & ASD Skills Centre Mentor**

I would like to say how fantastic the Skills Centre is in supporting the ASD students within Hugh Christie. As a Year 11 Student Leader, my main role is Skills Centre Mentor, where I focus on improving school life for those students with ASD. I work with one student in particular, although during break and lunch times I also support other students by helping them to socialise and resolving any issues they may have. This responsibility has also helped me to manage my own anxiety difficulties, by enabling me to develop my self-esteem and confidence. In the Sixth Form I hope to develop my role within the Skills Centre, so that I can support and mentor more ASD students.

I can confirm that I am in support of the proposal from the KCC to enhance the Skills Centre Provision from September 2015. This will enable the school to develop its resources, which will benefit all ASD students within the Skills Centre, whilst supporting a local need within the community.

**Views of current HCTC Students with ASD**

- It has really helped and they would like it to help others
- The staff at school are really helpful and know a lot about ASD
- It could save a lot of travelling time for some people.



### **Parents/Carers**

- Delighted that this consultation to extend the schools services in this field are being explored. Can speak positively about how the school has already helped my child with communication and particularly in respect of realising academic potential.
- HC would be an ideal place to extend ASD services for other children and young people, to gain from their expertise and to make a real difference.
- Very strong agreement to this proposal happening – an amazing idea. Already have a child who attends HC, who recently diagnosed, receives support. If this proposal goes ahead would also send other child to HC too.
- Proposal is good as long as criteria set out is met, i.e. the children can cope reasonably well in a mainstream school and the governors and staff have a say who attends.

### **Governor (HCTC)**

- The Skills Centre at HCTC is already a well-established support mechanism for students with difficulties, including ASD. Staff are skilled, dedicated and extremely adept at ensuring the best education for students with difficulties within the mainstream setting.
- My support is based on my knowledge and information provided by Senior Leaders and data analysis and observations when I visit or conduct monitoring exercises as part of my role as Governor.
- The work currently undertaken in the Skills Centre, which the proposal extends, has an extremely positive impact for all students of HCTC, not just for those with difficulties. There is no detrimental effect on the achievement and outcomes for any student, and if issues arise during the school day staff handle them sensitively and appropriately.
- This proposal will enhance the learning experience for all students that attend HCTC and will ensure that students with ASD will have an excellent opportunity to receive an excellent education and obtain desirable outcomes.

### **Member of Staff at another school**

#### **Agree**

- I believe there is certainly a local need for this provision.
- As a primary SRP next door to Hugh Christie we are delighted with the proposal of a secondary provision to match our pupils' needs and provide a suitable progression for secondary placement. At the Phoenix Centre we work hard at developing our pupils' independence and learning skills to enable them to integrate successfully with their main school peers, however, up until now, there has been very limited replication of our provision in a secondary setting, which has resulted in the majority of our students going onto special schools for their secondary schooling. We would be very pleased to work alongside Hugh Christie in getting this SRBP up and running and providing our skills and experience in developing this provision (Phoenix Centre, Cage Green School).

### **Parent/carer at another school**

- As a parent of a child that attended HCTC (until 6<sup>th</sup> form whom had SEND issues), I know first-hand that HCTC staff has the skills, enthusiasm and professionalism to support students who experience difficulties.
- HCTC staff are specialists in handling all kinds of issues but enable students to be educated in a mainstream setting. This is not only beneficial to students who have difficulties but to all students. Their education is enriched by mixing with young people who are often high achievers and who overcome difficulties with the right support.

### **Other**

- Hildenborough Parish Council feel this will be a welcome addition to the Skills Centre at Hugh Christie School, providing much needed places for ASD students in the area.

### **Against the Proposal**

#### **Parents/Carers**

- Opposed to the inclusion of children with ASD in a mainstream school.
- ASD is a condition that affects social interaction, communication, interests and behaviour. It includes Asperger Syndrome and childhood ASD. Integration of such children into a class would cause disruption to the learning of my child.
- The current management team have done a sterling job in improving teaching and behaviour within the school. Integrating children with these specific special needs will send a message out to the local community that although they are an all- inclusive school they are not aspiring to compete with other good schools in the area. This will have an effect on those parents applying for the school.
- A new SRBP is not appropriate considering the Skills Centre is intended as an integration provision and not as a special unit within the school.
- All comprehensive schools should be encouraged to set up similar provisions to support students with ASD in order that the needs of a school's catchment area can be met.
- Understand that if Furness School in Swanley close, there is an intention to offer places at Hugh Christie to some of their existing ASD students, if the SRBP is put in place. Do not consider Swanley to be in the local area and many ASD students of a special school would find inclusion into a mainstream environment very difficult and stressful. In this situation all parties can suffer – the ASD student, the family, the learning and well-being of other students as well as the effects on the teaching and support staff.
- Strongly believe that inclusion does not work for all young people with ASD which is why special schools such as Furness School offer an important learning environment which is adapted to the particular needs of these young people.