

## Appendix 4 Additional Information

### Support Services – Specialist Nursery Intervention

1.1. The Council commissions two services from Special Schools in Kent. One of these is the Specialist Nursery Intervention. This is commissioned from 11 special schools across the county through a Service Level Agreement that expires July 2024. The service focuses on the identification and assessment of children with SEND.

1.2. There are eleven Specialist Intervention nurseries in Kent, with a Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place for each district apart from Sevenoaks. The current SLAs have been in place since September 2019 and will come to an end in July 2024. Below is a breakdown of commissioned hours and cost of each nursery for 2022/2023.

School	Commissioned full time places	Funding
The Ifield School	6	£113,734.00
The Foreland School	10	£208,123.00
Nexus School	8	£133,077.00
The Beacon School	10	£208,123.00
St Nicholas' School	6	£113,734.00
Milestone School	12	£227,467.00
The Wyvern School	5	£104,062.00
Meadowfield School	6	£113,734.00
Five Acre Wood	15	£256,483.00
Oakley	12	£227,467.00
ASPEN	7	£123,405.00

1.3. The Service Level Agreement (SLA) describes the aims as ensuring that *“individual pupils’ special educational needs are clearly identified, that suitable provision for their needs is provided and to ensure that the outcomes of access to that provision are good progress in their learning, communication and social skills, health and emotional well-being.*

*The Specialist Nursery Provision fulfil commitments set out in KCC's SEND policy to identify the most complex pupils and intervene early; to ensure the pupils with the most complex needs have earlier access to Specialist Intervention from specialist teaching staff and effective in class support where appropriate."*

- 1.4. Referrals to the specialist nursery intervention are made through the Portage Service or the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) where a graduated response has been implemented. The admissions process is overseen by the SEN Inclusion Fund (SENIF) Finance Manager.
- 1.5. The intervention is strictly two terms with children usually only attending on average for nine hours a week, whilst also attending their existing mainstream setting. This equates to three three-hour sessions a week (or average nine hours in total per week). This can be extended if required.
- 1.6. There are three intakes a year. If children are referred and accepted, they will typically have to wait until the start of the next term to attend.
- 1.7. The nurseries provide four types of support to children, called 'pathways'.
  - Pathway One: Specialist Nursery Extended Intervention for children with severe and complex needs, significant medical needs and/or where a final EHCP already been issued and who need to be in one setting for a prolonged period before starting school.
  - Pathway Two: Specialist Observation and Assessment Intervention for children where an EHC Plan is considered to be appropriate and the observation period at the nursery is used to gather evidence to inform the statutory assessment.
  - Pathway Three: Specialist Focussed Intervention (onsite) for children who will benefit from an intensive intervention of support that will enable them to remain in their mainstream provision.
  - Pathway Four: Specialist Focussed Intervention (offsite) where children who cannot access the nursery itself receive a comparable level of support and intervention from nursery staff in their mainstream setting.
- 1.8. The service has seen the level of demand for support increase significantly. The service supported 561 children 2022-2023, which is a higher number of children than ever before and a 40% increase compared to 2019-2020.
- 1.9. In terms of outcomes, pathway two is the most frequently identified pathway. During 2020-2021 and 2021-2022, 69% of children attending the specialist nurseries did so through Pathway two. In 2020-2021 this equated to 235 children, 97% of who were issued with an EHC Plan.
- 1.10. In academic years 2020-2021, of the 368 children who received a specialist intervention, 226 children (61.4%) went on to Specialist provision in Reception Year (year R) and 118 (32.1%) went on to mainstream.

- 1.11. Due to the gaps in data available, it is unknown what the figure is for 2021-2022 and it is too soon to determine what the data shows us for the most recent academic year. However, there is concern that Specialist Nursery Intervention creates an expectation and pathway towards special, rather than mainstream, education.
- 1.12. The existence of Specialist Intervention Nurseries is historic. The number of commissioned places has remained static and are not informed through the Sufficiency process. This means that districts experience capacity issues to different degrees.
- 1.13. The current SLA states that, when there are too many children for the places available, priority should be given to the oldest child, because of the need for timely interventions before transfer to statutory education. Due to limited capacity within the Specialist Nurseries, in most cases, children are admitted the year before reception year, meaning that older children with less complex issues can be supported before younger children with more complex issues. This may vary across the county.
- 1.14. The current two term limited intervention means that children who need support can wait up to two terms (depending on when their placement is agreed) before being able to access it.
- 1.15. The focus on onsite support means that child with a Specialist Nursery Intervention could go through the more transitions in a very short amount of time, than another child would typically go through throughout their educational journey.
- 1.16. The service has evolved throughout the years resulting in several different operating models across the county. In Dover, the district operates a different model and referral process. Whitfield Aspen nursery only accommodates children with the most profound, complex and/or medical needs on site. The school then focus most of their interventions through Pathway Four offering outreach support to children with lower levels of need.
- 1.17. As a result, they do not have the two term intake restrictions, referrals are usually approved within 24 hours and the intervention starts with the child on Monday the following week.
- 1.18. Although there is currently no concrete evidence to suggest that there are better outcomes with the different model operating in Dover, children are receiving support from the Specialist Nursery Intervention much sooner than others in the county. Delivery of support within the mainstream setting itself supports building capacity within mainstream settings to meet the needs of children with SEN.

1.19. Case studies have evidenced that children make good progress when they are at the specialist setting, but this is not always maintained when they are back at their mainstream setting. There is an argument that strategies need to be taught and developed in the environment that they are intended to be used in, an approach taken on by many other local authorities, some of which are a comparable size to Kent.

1.20. Some Local Authorities, for example, Lincolnshire and Essex are much less reliant on Specialist Nurseries and feel strongly that that any assessment or support is best brought to or carried out in the child's usual environment, avoiding unnecessary transitions.