

Record of operational decision

Decision title:	To approve the proposal of a satellite site of Hampton Dene Primary School and age range change to establish an Early Years Assessment Base, for 3 – 5 year olds, from Autumn 2023
Date of decision:	3 August 2023
Decision maker:	Head of Educational Development
Authority for delegated decision:	The authority for the specified officer to take this decision as set out in the Children and Young Peoples scheme of delegation line 91. https://councillors.herefordshire.gov.uk/ecSDDisplayclassic.aspx?NAME=SOD01
Ward:	All wards;
Consultation:	Herefordshire Council conducted a consultation, which ran from 27 June to 25 July 2023, which they received no responses.
Decision made:	To approve the satellite site of Hampton Dene Primary School and the establishment of an Early Years Assessment Base for 3-5 year olds.
Reasons for decision:	<p>Herefordshire Council (HC) has offered assessment of Early Years (EY) children with complex learning difficulties at the two special schools that cater for primary-age children with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulty (Westfield Special School in Leominster and Blackmarston Primary Special School in Hereford).</p> <p>Sufficiency projections have established that demand has significantly increased and will continue to increase and additional capacity is urgently required. Current forecasts indicate that approximately 150 additional special school or specialist places will be needed over the next 4 years. This includes pressure to identify further additional places for Early Years children.</p> <p>Westfield and Blackmarston special schools are now full for new admissions in September 2023 for nursery and reception-age children.</p> <p>Information received from the education and health staff at the Child Development Centre where children are assessed, diagnosed and supported and from other services such as</p>

the Portage Team who work with EY children and families in their homes, confirms the significant growth in demand.

During the period from 2010 to 2022 the number of EY children with EHC Plans has trebled.

Sufficiency projections have identified a priority need to ensure a significant expansion in the number of EY specialist places for children with learning difficulties and other complex presentations of need from September 2023 and, based on our work on sufficiency, it is acknowledged that this increasing demand is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

In considering how to address the growth in demand, it has also become evident that there has been an increase in the number of parents or carers seeking specialist school places for their children at Nursery and Reception age. For many children this is a very early stage for their parents to make the decision about whether mainstream or special education will best meet their needs.

This proposal recognises the legal right of a 'presumption to mainstream' in which all children should be able to have their needs met at a mainstream school, alongside a parental right to express a preference for their child's school (SEND Code of Practice 2015) We also acknowledge that for some children with complex and substantial levels of need, the concentration of facilities in a specialist setting can be beneficial.

Experience with our existing resource bases has been highly positive and has created an ethos of inclusion throughout the schools concerned. This proposal would also strengthen the support for children with complex learning needs across our mainstream schools by providing additional resource to provide outreach by specialist staff into mainstream schools. The EYAB would also offer mainstream staff the opportunity to visit the base to upskill themselves to meet the widest possible range of needs in their own schools. As such the base is expected to impact on skills and knowledge of staff and the removal of barriers to inclusion in the wider education community.

Currently, for those attending the special school nurseries, the offer has been for mornings or afternoons only which can have a limiting effect on parents' ability to gain employment. This proposal provides an opportunity to extend the offer to [30 hours of free childcare in a specialist provision for those children that meet the national criteria.](#)

Highlight any associated risks/finance/legal/equality considerations:	<p>The following principles are particularly relevant to this proposal (Statutory Guidance: SEND Code of practice 2015):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need to support the child or young person, and the child’s parents, to facilitate the development of the child or young person and to help them achieve the best possible educational outcomes, preparing them effectively for adulthood. (1.1.) • The early identification of children and young people’s needs and early intervention to support them (1.2) • Collaboration between education, health and social care services to provide support (1.2) • High quality provision to meet the needs of children and young people with SEN (1.2) • A focus on inclusive practice and removing barriers to learning (1.2) • The Children and Families Act 2014 secures the general presumption in law of mainstream education in relation to decisions about where children and young people with SEN should be educated and the Equality Act 2010 provides protection from discrimination for disabled children. (1.26)
Details of any alternative options considered and rejected:	None
Details of any declarations of interest made:	None

Signed..... Date: 3 August 2023

Head of Educational Development