

Consultation Document

Autism Support Centre

Consultation on establishing Enhanced provision for children with Autistic Spectrum Conditions at Hamford Primary Academy, Elm Tree Avenue, Walton on the Naze, Essex, CO14 8TE, from 1 September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter.

February 2016

Introduction

The Local Authority has a critical role as champion for vulnerable children and young people in its area. It ensures that disabled children and those with special or additional educational needs can access high-quality provision that meets their needs as near to their local community as possible.

The Local Authority has decided to maintain and develop special school provision in Essex and to seek to increase specialist provision proportionally across the county in response to predicted demand. An integral part of the Essex Local Offer is to ensure Essex has a continuum of provision for children with Autistic Spectrum Conditions. The Local Authority has identified a gap in educational provision concerning young people with Autistic Spectrum Conditions who require access to a mainstream curriculum, and have the ability to access a mainstream curriculum but are highly anxious and would benefit from even more specialised support than is normally available in such a setting. To address this gap the Local Authority is developing a small number of Autism Support Centres (ASCs) attached to mainstream schools.

Hamford Primary Academy applied to be the host school for the primary ASC in North Essex and is delighted to have been selected by the authority as host school, subject to successful consultation.

This consultation proposes to establish a eight place Autism Support Centre for youngsters of primary school age at Hamford Primary Academy in Walton on the Naze.

The Local Authority is also proposing a fifteen place ASC for secondary aged children at Tendring Technology College, and a separate consultation will be undertaken in respect of the secondary provision by the nominated host school. As a result Hamford and TTC will be able to provide a continuum of provision for children with Autistic Spectrum Conditions from primary through to 6th Form.

It is important to hear the views of all those with an interest in the school during this consultation period. Please read this document and let us have your comments in writing by 18th April 2016. You may reply electronically at the following web address: ascprovision@hamfordprimaryacademy.org

Dear Parents/Carers, Staff and interested persons

This consultation document contains important information about proposals by Hamford Primary Academy to:

Establish an eight place Autism Support Centre integrated within Hamford Primary Academy in Walton on the Naze from September 1st 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter.

Background

There has been a significant increase in the number of children and young people diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Conditions, both nationally and in Essex. The increase can be explained by wider criteria for diagnosis and improved awareness. One study suggested that currently up to one in every hundred children may merit such a diagnosis at some point in their lives (Baird et al, 2006). The demand for specialist provision to meet the needs of these children is high and increasing.

Every Local Authority needs to provide educational provision to meet the full range of needs of children and young people with an Autistic Spectrum Condition diagnosis across the full age range from 0 to 19 years. In Essex there is a range of provision available, from Good Beginnings and pre-school specialist teachers in the early years to the specialist teacher team for Autistic Spectrum Conditions and Asperger syndrome and Good Futures (Autism Support Workers) support for children up to Year 7 in mainstream schools. In addition, some children with statements/Education Health and Care Plans of special educational need attend Essex special schools and a small number are educated in out of county provision, both on a day and residential basis.

Essex has successfully established the first two Autism Support Centres in Harlow from September 2015 and is seeking to establish a further six from September 2016 to ensure parity of provision across the four quadrants of Essex. The January 2015 census showed that there were 2,035 children and young people with a statement for which the primary need was Autistic Spectrum Conditions. Of these, 1,066 were of primary age and 969 were of secondary age (to year 14). 1,378 youngsters were educated in mainstream schools, academies or out of school, 498 in Essex Special schools and 159 were educated at either independent schools or schools in other Local Authorities.

Vision and Ethos for Learners and the Community

Children based in an ASC will be included in the mainstream school. They will receive additional help from experienced and qualified professionals to assist their access to mainstream schools where they may otherwise struggle and potentially fail.

The overall aim of the ASC provision is to impact positively upon learning outcomes for learners. The vision is for all children and young people diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Conditions to be healthy, happy and safe, to do well in their education and to be successful in their lives. This vision is derived from the vision outlined in Essex County Council's Special Educational Needs policy.

Effective support of children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Conditions can pose significant challenges if these learners are to be included socially and in accessing the curriculum appropriately. One aim of the present initiative is to develop a provision which could enable learners with Autistic Spectrum Conditions to successfully access a mainstream curriculum with support.

The learners referred to the Autism Support Centre at Hamford;

- will be of the appropriate age for the setting;
- will have complex and additional needs in particular areas on the banding descriptors for autism;
- will be intellectually able to access the mainstream school curriculum ;
- will be able to access the inclusive provisions offered;

In addition;

- Parents/carers will have expressed a desire for mainstream education for their child and will have visited the provision and expressed their commitment to working with the school to ensure the success of the placement;
- The school and the Local Authority's Statutory Assessment Service will have worked together to agree the suitability of the placement in line with current practice.

Benefits of the proposal

Learners with a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Conditions who may be anxious and have social communication difficulties will be able to attend mainstream school and access a mainstream curriculum with specialist support to help manage their Autism.

The ASCs will employ specialist staff and receive additional support from a local ASC Hub special school, providing considerable expertise in educating young people with Autistic Spectrum Conditions.

The aim of the ASC will be to provide facilities to allow more youngsters with Autistic Spectrum Conditions access to mainstream education in Essex. Placing learners in out of county provision sets them apart from their peers and is a huge drain on resources. Sensitively supported inclusion in a mainstream school is an essential step towards a child being able to develop strategies for life. For those who currently attend an out of authority school, the proposal will enable them to remain closer to their own community.

What would the admission and transport arrangements be in both the short and longer term?

Admission to the ASC will be triggered when that provision is named in an Education Health and Care Plan. The Planned Admissions Number at Hamford Primary Academy will not change. There will be an intended maximum of three learners admitted to the ASC in any one year group. Transport arrangements will be in accordance with the Local Authority's published policy on transport to mainstream enhanced provisions.

Why are we consulting the Community?

We want to hear the views of the community before making a final decision on this proposal.

A complementary consultation will also be undertaken to establish an ASC for secondary aged children at Tendring Technology College. The Local Authority is seeking to establish a continuum of provision for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Conditions in Mid Essex and therefore needs to establish provision for both primary and secondary aged learners.

How can you make your views known?

This consultation period on the proposal to establish an eight place ASC at Hamford Primary Academy in Walton on the Naze commences on 7th March 2016 and will end on 18th April 2016. Parents, staff and members of the local community are encouraged to ask questions and express their views on the proposal. Meetings have been arranged for staff and children at the school. A drop-in session has also been arranged at the school on 14th April 2016 at 6pm for parents and other interested parties who would like to find out more about the proposal. At this stage no decision has been made, and all views received will be considered prior to a decision being taken as to whether to go ahead with the proposal.

In addition, you may wish to submit your comments in writing. You may use the form attached or write separately to the address provided overleaf, or email to ascprovision@hamfordprimaryacademy.org Essex County Council and Hamford Primary Academy handle information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 and is the data controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998. Your answers to this consultation will only be used to assess the community's view of the proposed development and not for any other purpose. We will not give information about you to anyone outside Essex County Council.

If you have any questions about the consultation process or the proposal you can telephone Gary Bloom, Manager SEND Planning and Provision Development, on 03330131154, or alternatively contact Mr Benedick Ashmore-Short, Principal at Hamford Primary Academy or Mrs Kathy Roebuck, Chair of Governors, via the school.

What happens next?

At the end of this consultation period Hamford Primary Academy will consider the feedback and views expressed by all interested parties during the consultation and will make a decision on the proposal. If a decision is made to proceed, a business case will be made to the Secretary of State for Education for her consideration. The decision to approve or reject the establishment of the ASC at Hamford Primary Academy rests with the Secretary of State.

Timescale

The consultation period will run from 7th March 2016. Meetings will be held with staff, governors, school councils, parents and other interested parties during this period.

Date	Activity
7/3/2016	Consultation document distributed.
14/4/2016 6pm	Drop in session for parents and the local community at the school
18/4/2016	End of consultation period
19/4/2016 – 25/4/2016	Consultation of responses by Hamford Primary Academy
28/4/2016	Business case prepared and submitted if decision is to proceed
Estimate May 2016	Decision taken by Secretary of State

RESPONSE FORM

PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A 8 PLACE AUTISM SUPPORT CENTRE (ASC) AT HAMFORD PRIMARY ACADEMY IN WALTON ON THE NAZE FROM SEPTEMBER 2016 OR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THEREAFTER.

Please respond to the question below and add comments if you wish. You can do this electronically at ascprovision@hamfordprimaryacademy.org or by using the form below (attaching other sheets as necessary).

Please indicate below with a X whether or not you support the proposal

I support the proposal to establish a 8 place ASC at Hamford Primary Academy, Walton on the Naze, from September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter	
I do not support the proposal to establish a 8 place ASC at Hamford Primary Academy, Walton on the Naze, from September 2016 or as soon as possible thereafter	

Please provide any supporting information for your preference above.

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Please attach other sheets as necessary.

Name:

Address:

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Interest group:
(e.g. parent, teacher, member of the local community etc.)

Please return this form by 18/4/2016: to Hamford Primary Academy, Elm Tree Avenue, Walton on the Naze, Essex, CO14 8TE.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR RESPONSE