

EXPANDING OUR HIGH NEEDS CAPACITY
Report of the Director of Education, Work, and Skills

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The Council has an enduring statutory responsibility to commission sufficient high quality school places of sufficient type and quantity. We know we need a greater emphasis on local provision meeting local need, connecting and rooting a pupil within their community. This can be achieved through mainstream inclusion and the commissioning of resource provision.
- 1.2 Inclusive education is education that includes everyone, irrespective of SEND, gender or faith, learning together in our schools, and colleges. SEND strategy acknowledges that as well as having inclusion in education, we must also create education and community infrastructure to allow the community a pupil lives in to be inclusive.
- 1.3 To achieve true inclusion and assure resilience in Stockport, the offer of SEN support, resourced, alternative provision, and special school places needs to grow and develop, reflecting the changing dynamic across the Borough. The combination of excellent practice in mainstream schools with a quality and consistent SEN support offer, coupled with the choice of local high needs places and alternative provision, will ensure provide capacity, breadth of provision, and a sufficiency model which reduces our reliance on high-cost independent special school places.
- 1.4 In December 2021 we set ourselves a target to have a minimum of 2 primary resource bases in every neighbourhood and a nearby secondary resource base for all localities. As such Stockport required a further 8 resource bases in the primary phase, and a further 3 resource bases in the secondary phase; 128 primary and 96 secondary places respectively.
- 1.5 We have been hugely successful in delivering our vision and more, creating capacity and breadth of provision in Stockport; We have opened two new resource bases in secondary and expanded a third. We have a fourth secondary resource base opening in September 2025. A new resource base at St Bernadett's Catholic Primary School will open in September 2024 and have commitments from the DfE to expand/formalise two resource bases as part of the school rebuilding programme. We are opening a new secondary alternative provision during the 2024/25 academic year with an expansion of Highfields College's network of alternative provision. This is all on top of the expected delivery of Pear Tree Special School and the expanded Lisburne Special School.
- 1.6 This document continues our work and seeks to formalise plans to create a resource base at Tithe Barn Primary School and St Paul's CE Primary School; to create fit for purpose and specialised areas within these schools that will be capable of meeting more complex need within a mainstream setting.

- 1.7 It considers the findings of two rounds of the statutory proposals required by the statutory 'prescribed alteration' process recommending the creation of these bases be approved.

BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Stockport must consider the full educational journey of all of its residents and ensure that all learners have the opportunity to access rich, varied and expansive learning experiences to achieve their full potential and prepare for adulthood and independence.
- 2.2 The full scope of delivery spans from early years through to post-16 and up to the age of 25 for those with an Education, Health and Care plan.
- 2.3 Stockport currently has a blend of graduated provision to meet the needs of all its pupils.
- **Mainstream** – pupils are supported in class having their needs met by a class teacher or teaching assistant;
 - **Mainstream (SEN support)** - pupils are supported within mainstream classes and may need additional support with their learning;
 - **Resourced** - pupils attend a mainstream setting but spend some of their time in a support rich environment separate from the mainstream class and receive differentiated learning;
 - **Special School** - pupils for whose needs are so significant and complex that they cannot be met in a mainstream or resourced settings;
 - **Alternative** - This provision offers appropriate placements, therapies and interventions for pupils who would not receive suitable learning otherwise due to exclusion, illness or other reason. This also applies to pupils who struggle to engage with an academic curriculum and would therefore suit vocational based subjects.
- 2.4 Currently approx. 18% of the pupil population has a special education need or disability, of which 4.8% of the pupil population has an Education, Health and Care Plan which has been historically higher than regional and national levels. The number of pupils with SEND is projected to grow (upper limit) by 2.85% (approx.56 pupils) each year for at least the next 3 years.
- 2.5 The profile of types of SEND (primary need) is changing with children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) or Autism accounting for a greater proportion of children each year (increase of 17% and 29% respectively since 2018) whereas Speech, Communication and language Needs (SCLN) is decreasing in relative proportion (decreasing by 2.2% each year) although still a significant driver of intervention and support.
- 2.6 The historic offer within the specialist, alternative and resourced provision has not been sufficient in the context of the significant increases we have seen for those with more complex SEMH and Autism needs and has led to the commissioning of external school places.

2.7 As well as profiles of size and need changing for pupils with SEND, localities contributing the greatest proportion of pupils have changed. Edgeley, Stockport (centre), Offerton, Brinnington, and Reddish have proportionally higher numbers of children with SEND than other areas of Stockport.

2.8 The new resource provision we have created have been a resounding success and have not only provided high quality places to children with complex SEND but they have also created environments and specialisms with the school that have helped children in the wider mainstream population with social, emotional and/or mental health issues.

2.9 Consideration is being given to primary schools based on their geographical location and whether it could be a strategic asset should there be high levels of SEND need emerging from that locality. Consideration is also being given to prevalence of children with SEND in their mainstream cohort currently, their ability to meet the needs of these children and achieve good outcomes.

STATUTORY PROCESS

3.1 The creation of new SEND provision at a maintained community school is considered a prescribed alteration and is subject to a statutory change process.

3.2 The process that must be followed is as follows:

Stage	Description	Timescale	Comments
Stage 1	Publication (statutory proposal/notice)		Published on web
Stage 2	Representation (formal consultation)	Must be 4 weeks	Stockport would consult for minimum of 6 weeks
Stage 3	Decision	Decision made by Cabinet, must be made within 2 months. If no decision the expansion decision would fall to the Office of the School's Adjudicator (OSA)	The OSA can only arbitrate on matters relating to the decision to create a new resource provision and not the implications of that decision.
Stage 4	Implementation	No prescribed timescale	It must be as specified in the published statutory notice, subject to any modifications agreed by the decision-maker

STATUTORY PROPOSALS

- 4.1 Following the statutory change process above and completing a stage 1, pre-proposal consultation (discussed below), the publication of statutory proposals took place on 18th March 2024 for St Paul's CE Primary School and on 15th April 2024 for Tithe Barn Primary School.
- 4.2 The statutory proposals for both schools can be found in the appendices to this report: St Paul's CE Primary School **Appendix 1**, Tithe Barn Primary School **Appendix 3**.
- 4.3 Statutory proposals outline the type and need for change at a maintained school, they provide indicative timescales, locations and notional costs to implement the change.
- 4.4 Should the Cabinet decide to approve plans to create permanent resource bases at these schools, the Council has two years to act on those plans. If it fails to do so, it must follow the statutory process again and seek new authority from a decision maker.
- 4.5 The Council is in no way bound by the timescales and notional costs stated in the statutory proposals.

CONSULTATION

- 5.1 A findings report summarising the responses can be found in **Appendix 2 and Appendix 4**.
- 5.2 As a summary to the report, there was an overwhelming majority of respondents in favour of the creation of resource bases at these schools, recognising that mainstream-high needs places are needed both Borough wide and locally.

EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1 These proposals seek to consider and prioritise the needs of children with special educational needs and disabilities and where possible provide suitable educational provision in their locality.
- 6.2 An equalities impact assessment has been completed (**Appendix 5**)

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

- 7.1 An environmental impact assessment has been completed (**Appendix 6**).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Note the contents of this report and agree to the implementation of statutory proposals and the creation of resource provision at:
 - St Paul's CE Primary School, and
 - Tithe Barn Primary School

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1 – St Paul’s CE Primary School Statutory Proposal

Appendix 2 – St Paul’s CE Primary School Findings Report

Appendix 3 – Tithe Barn Primary School Statutory Proposal

Appendix 4 – Tithe Barn Primary School Findings Report

Appendix 5 – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 6 – Environmental Impact Assessment

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