



PROPOSAL TO EXPAND DRUMBEAT SCHOOL & ASD SERVICE

Notice is given in accordance with Section 19 (1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013/3110 that Lewisham Council intends to expand the permanent capacity of Drumbeat School & ASD Service from 223 places to 270 places with effect from September 2022.

Name, address and contact details of proposer:

Lewisham Council, Laurence House, 1 Catford Road, London SE6 4RU

Name, address and category of school:

Drumbeat School & ASD Service, Roundtable Road, London BR1 5LE

This is a community special school.

Description of alteration:

The Council proposes that Drumbeat School & ASD Service's capacity should permanently increase from 223 to 270 pupils from September 2022.

The proposal means that over time the school will cater for a cohort that has increased by 47 students from its current published capacity.

To achieve this expansion, the Council will be utilising spare space within the school which will be re-purposed to provide appropriate teaching accommodation and will also be utilising spare space on an additional site, which can be converted and accessed swiftly to help accommodate children as soon as possible. The additional site (part of Turnham Academy, Turnham Road, SE4 2HH) is currently underutilised due to a fall in primary pupil numbers (across London), and will be repurposed to provide a suitable environment for some of the primary cohort within Drumbeat, allowing the school as a whole to grow. This approach ensures that pupil movement will be kept to a minimum. The Local Authority, School and STEP Academy Trust (of which Turnham Academy is a part) are all working together to enable the expansion.

Evidence of demand:

In 2019, Lewisham Council started the coproduction and consultation process for the Local Area SEND Strategy which was due to be launched in 2020. From the consultation a number of areas were highlighted as gaps in current provision across the Council. One of these was around sufficiency and place planning. Therefore, as part of the SEND Strategy there is a work stream on Sufficiency, and Place Planning. To ensure that the plan reflected the current picture of gaps in provision a number of data exercises were carried out.

The data continues to show an increasing demand for specialist provision for children and young people with Autism. Currently (May 2022) there are 1170 EHC plans where autism has been identified as the primary area of difference. This is over one third of the number of EHC plans that are issued by Lewisham, 3359.

In academic year 2021-2022, to date, Drumbeat have received 224 consultations for places within the school. From those consultations they were able to meet the needs of 80 pupils but did not have the capacity within the school. These young people are now being educated in Independent Placements outside of Lewisham.

In the same time period, the primary autism resource bases have received 30 consultations where they felt that they were able to meet needs but did not have the capacity to.

All provisions for students with autism are over their commissioned numbers and the demand for these specialist places continue to grow.

Subsequently this proposal seeks to cater for this increase in demand and reduce the need to place out of Borough, and deliver an immediate increase in ASD places. Thus far, Drumbeat School have been able to go over number by 10% as allowable by the statutory guidance, and so currently caters for 223 pupils. However for the school to increase its numbers further this statutory consultation process must take place.

The need for a number of these places already exists, as can be shown by the pressure to commission additional ASD places outside of Lewisham as Drumbeat School is currently full and therefore in effect oversubscribed. These commissioned places outside of the Borough, are often in expensive, and distant, independent provision.

Objectives:

The objective of the proposal is to utilise additional capacity within school buildings to accommodate the increase in demand for ASD provision within the borough and reduce the need to commission out of borough placements, as placing young people in provision that is further afield does not benefit the young person in terms of social inclusion or a sense of community. There is often an extensive amount of travel time (often in isolation) which is disadvantageous also. The ability to cater for our young people and their families close to home will allow the wider range of support systems to function in the best interests of those young people and their families.

The proposal would build on the good (with outstanding features) Ofsted rated standards for teaching and learning already in place at the school and provide additional places without having any negative impact on other schools, academies and educational institutions in the area. The proposal would also have a positive impact on travel distance/time for some students.

This proposal forms part of Lewisham Council's response to the statutory obligation to provide sufficient school places.

Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation:

The additional places proposed would enable the school to grow to admit up to 270 pupils in total. This may not occur on the date of first expansion. It is not possible to be more specific as each year group is a different size, dictated by need.

Effect on other educational institutions in the area:

Whilst a major portion of the expansion will be accommodated on another school site (Turnham Academy) it is not anticipated that the proposed expansion of Drumbeat School will have any detrimental impact on other educational facilities within the local area. Turnham Academy is built as a 3 Form of Entry school (630 places total), and currently has 250 pupils on roll (as at Spring Census 2022). The proposal has been made to accommodate the increase in pupil numbers that is being experienced within the Borough and to reduce the reliance on out of borough provision. STEP Academy Trust, both Schools and the Local Authority are all working together to provide local places for Lewisham young people with ASD.

Project Costs:

The proposal seeks to utilize existing space within the school buildings, and will only require light refurbishment/adaptations to ensure suitability for the pupils. Any costs arising will be met via council and/or school funds.

Commenting on the proposal:

Within five weeks from the date of publication of this proposal (by 12 noon, 17 June 2022), any person may comment on, support, or object to the proposal in writing to Matt Henaughan, Head of Infrastructure, 2nd Floor Laurence House, 1 Catford Road, London SE6 4RU, matt.henaughan@lewisham.gov.uk

There will also be a public meeting for interested parties held at Turnham Academy, Turnham Road, SE4 2HH at 3.30pm on Monday 23 May.

Signed: Matt Henaughan, Head of Infrastructure, Children and Young People's Services

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