



Mayor and Cabinet

Report title: Adding a SEN Resource Base at Forster Park Primary School – Decision Report

Date: 6 July 2022

Key decision: Yes

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: Whole Borough

Outline and recommendations

This report provides the results of the statutory period of representation conducted on the proposal to add a Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision catering for up to 21 children with Autism Spectrum Disorder(ASD)/Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs (SEMH) at Forster Park Primary School with an anticipated implementation of Autumn 2022. The report then goes on to seek a decision from the Mayor and Cabinet (as LA Statutory Decision Maker) to enable this addition of a SEN provision to take place.

The Mayor and Cabinet are recommended:

- to note the results of the period of representation conducted on the proposal to add a SEN provision at Forster Park Primary School.
- to agree to the proposal of an addition of a SEN provision of up to 21 ASD/SEMH places at Forster Park Primary School, with an implementation date of Autumn 2022.
- to delegate authority to the Executive Director for Children and Young People to procure and award the necessary construction contracts

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

13 May 2022

The statutory notice and proposal for the addition of a SEN provision at Forster Park Primary School were published in the South London Press and on the Lewisham website

13 May 2022 – 17 June 2022

Period of representation (Period of time when people can submit comments regarding the proposal)

12pm 17 June 2022

Deadline for comments on proposal

1. Summary

- 1.1 The report feeds back on the representation period and seeks a decision from the Mayor and Cabinet regarding the proposed addition of a SEN provision at Forster Park Primary School for up to 21 children with ASD/SEMH, with an implementation date of Autumn 2022.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Mayor and Cabinet are recommended:
- 2.2 to note the results of the period of representation conducted on the proposal to add a SEN provision at Forster Park Primary School
- 2.3 to agree to the proposal of an addition of a SEN provision of up to 21 ASD/SEMH places at Forster Park Primary School, with an implementation date of Autumn 2022.
- 2.4 to delegate authority to the Executive Director for Children and Young People to procure and award the necessary construction contracts

3. Policy Context

- 3.1 The proposal to add a SEN provision at Forster Park Primary School will contribute to the following key priority outcomes of Lewisham's Corporate Strategy 2018-2022:
- 3.2 Giving children and young people the best start in life – every child has access to an outstanding and inspiring education and is given the support they need to keep them safe, well and able to achieve their full potential.
- 3.3 And specifically helps deliver against the commitment to increase the provision for children with special educational needs to meet children's learning need within the borough.
- 3.4 The Local Authority has a duty to ensure the provision of sufficient places for pupils of statutory school age

Place Planning Strategy 2017-22

- 3.5 A recommendation of the 2016 Lewisham Education Commission Report was for the Council to develop a new 5 year Place Planning Strategy that succeeded the Primary Strategy for Change. Officers reviewed what had gone on before and what needs to be achieved in the future, and the draft strategy went through a public consultation process. The strategy was approved by Mayor and Cabinet on 22 March 2017.
- 3.6 Within the strategy the council committed to constantly review its forecasting to ensure that the supply of school places met need as accurately as possible, as both undersupply and oversupply can have knock on effects on school standards and finances.
- 3.7 Within this the strategy also highlights the need to review the provision we have within the borough that caters for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), to ensure that the correct provision is provided in the right place at the right time.

School Organisation Requirements

- 3.8 Proposals to add a SEN provision at a school must comply with the provisions set out in *The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006)* and *The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013*. These set

out the statutory process for making changes to a school, and statutory guidance on making changes to a maintained school indicates 4 stages to making a prescribed alteration to a maintained school. These are:

- 1) Publication of a Statutory Notice
- 2) Representation period
- 3) Decision making
- 4) Implementation

3.9 In the case of a community school (which Forster Park Primary School is) the Local Authority must propose and conduct the publication and representation periods, with the Mayor and Cabinet (as statutory decision maker) then making the decision.

4. Background

4.1 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.

4.2 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, with an additional 363 where SEMH is the primary difference. This is over one third of the number of EHC plans that are issued by Lewisham, 3359.

4.3 As such the proposal to add a SEN provision at Forster Park Primary School comes as part of a wider piece of work that the council is undertaking to enable more Lewisham young people to be educated in Lewisham schools. This specifically links in with the proposals to add a SEN provision into Edmund Waller Primary School and to expand Drumbeat School, which together with this proposal will provide an additional 84 SEN places within the next 12 months.

4.4 Currently, within Lewisham there is no specialist provision for the dual diagnosis of students with Autism and SEMH. Whilst Drumbeat special school will meet the needs of students with a dual diagnosis this is for students who have a more complex presentation and are working at well below expected academic levels. 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.

4.5 The current autism resource bases have students with this dual presentation but they are permanently over capacity. 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.

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

4.7 These young people are now being educated in Independent Placements outside from Lewisham. In academic year 2021-2022 there are currently 62 students with either Autism, SEMH or a dual Autism and SEMH presentation being taught outside from Lewisham in Independent Specialist Provisions

- 4.8 The objective of the proposal is to ensure sufficiency of places offering the right level of support to students with a dual need of ASD/SEMH within the Borough.
- 4.9 This proposal forms part of Lewisham Council's response to the statutory obligation to provide sufficient school places.

Implementation of the proposal

- 4.10 The addition of the resource base will allow the school to cater for up to 21 pupils with ASD/SEMH over time. With the first pupils arriving in Autumn 2022.
- 4.11 The provision will utilise spare capacity within the school site, with some minor modifications made to ensure that the spaces are fit for purpose.

Effect on other educational institutions in the area

- 4.12 It is not anticipated that the proposed resource base will have any impact on other educational institutions within the local area. The proposal has been made to accommodate the continued increase in students diagnosed with ASD/SEMH and requiring additional support.

5. Publication & Representation

- 5.1 The statutory notice and proposal for the addition of a SEN provision at Forster Park Primary School were published on 13 May 2022, with the representation period running for 5 weeks until 17 June 2022.
- 5.2 As well as being published in the local press and on the Lewisham website, the proposal was distributed to all parents, carers and staff at the school
- 5.3 A public consultation meeting was held virtually on Tuesday 24 May for interested parties to attend, to discuss the proposals and pose further questions.
- 5.4 During the period of representation there were no responses received.
- 5.5 Officers have completed the statutory process fully and have received no objections to the proposal.
- 5.6 As such, officers recommend that the Mayor and Cabinet agree to the addition of a SEN provision at Forster Park Primary School, catering for up to 21 children with ASD/SEMH, with an implementation date of Autumn 2022.

6. Factors relevant to a making a decision on school organisation proposals

When making a decision on a school organisation proposal the Decision Maker must consider the following factors:

- 6.1 **Consideration of consultation and representation period**
The decision-maker will need to be satisfied that the appropriate consultation and/or representation period has been carried out and that the proposer has had regard to the responses received. If the proposer has failed to meet the statutory requirements, a proposal may be deemed invalid and therefore should be rejected. The decision-maker must consider all the views submitted, including all support for, objections to and comments on the proposal.

The consultation has been undertaken in accordance with the statutory requirements. Stakeholders have been involved in the development of the proposals. The notices have been published as required (See appendix 1 & 2). No views were submitted.

6.2 **Education standards and diversity of provision**

Decision-makers should consider the quality and diversity of schools in the relevant area and whether the proposal will meet or affect the needs of parents, raise local standards and narrow attainment gaps.

This expansion will allow the local authority to better meet the needs of our children and young people, by ensuring that our specialist provision is suitable for both the current and future cohort. Specifically the proposal will help cater for our growing number of children with ASD/SEMH.

6.3 **Equal opportunity issues**

The decision-maker must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires them to have 'due regard' to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

In developing this proposal the Council has had regards to its statutory responsibilities under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The proposal does not have any adverse effect on equal opportunity, and in fact helps the council deliver services that meet the needs of those with special educational needs and disabilities.

6.4 **Community cohesion**

Schools have a key part to play in providing opportunities for young people from different backgrounds to learn with, from, and about each other; by encouraging through their teaching, an understanding of, and respect for, other cultures, faiths and communities. When considering a proposal, the decision-maker should consider its impact on community cohesion. This will need to be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the community served by the school and the views of different groups within the community.

The proposal does not have any adverse effect on community cohesion. In fact it should have a positive impact on the local community as there will be an increase in places for pupils with a diagnosis of ASD/SEMH, ensuring that more pupils can attend school closer to home rather than having to attend provision outside of the borough.

6.5 **Travel and accessibility**

Decision-makers should satisfy themselves that accessibility planning has been properly taken into account and the proposed changes should not adversely impact on disadvantaged groups.

The decision-maker should bear in mind that a proposal should not unreasonably extend journey times or increase transport costs, or result in too many children being prevented from travelling sustainably due to unsuitable walking or cycling routes. A proposal should also be considered on the basis of how it will support and contribute to the LA's duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to school.

The proposal will enable more students to access specialist provision more locally, reducing the need for travel to out of borough provision, and as such actually has a positive impact on travel and accessibility.

6.6 **Funding**

The decision-maker should be satisfied that any necessary funding required to implement the proposal will be available and that all relevant local parties (e.g. trustees of the school, diocese or relevant diocesan board) have given their agreement. A proposal **cannot** be approved conditionally upon funding being made available.

Where proposers are relying on the department as the source of capital funding, there can be no assumption that the approval of a proposal will trigger the release of capital funds from the department, unless the department has previously confirmed in writing that such resources will be available; nor can any allocation 'in principle' be increased. In such circumstances the proposal should be rejected, or consideration deferred until it is clear that the capital necessary to implement the proposal will be provided.

Feasibility work has been conducted to identify any additional capital works required to enable the spare capacity at Forster Park Primary School to be both fit for purpose and used in a safe manner. Capital funding has been identified.

- 6.7 The Mayor and Cabinet are recommended to agree the proposal for the addition of a SEN provision catering for up to 21 children with ASD/SEMH at Forster Park Primary School with an implementation date of Autumn 2022

7. **Financial implications**

Capital Financial Implications

- 7.1 It is estimated that £65k capital funding is required for this project. This is available within the capital programme as is currently unallocated within CYP resources.

Revenue Financial Implications

- 7.2 The report supports the introduction of a new resource base for SEN provision of up to 21 ASD/SEMH places at Forster Park Primary School, with an implementation date of Autumn 2022
- 7.3 In line with all Local Authorities, SEN need is currently outstripping the provision available especially within Lewisham.
- 7.4 The establishment of the resource base is part of a mitigation plan being progressed with Schools Forum and Schools to meet demand and reduce costs especially those associated with high cost out of borough placements
- 7.5 There are no direct financial implications for the General Fund. However, transport is funded from the General Fund, it is anticipated that should a pupil placed at this provision with transport associated costs, the position would be more favourable than an out borough placement
- 7.6 The revenue income and expenditure for these additional places forms part of the High Needs Block within the Dedicated Schools Grant funding. As previously stated, this provision should support Lewisham strategy towards reducing costs

8. **Legal implications**

- 8.1 The Human Rights Act 1998 safeguards the rights of children in the borough to educational provision, which the local authority is empowered to provide in accordance

with its duties under domestic legislation.

- 8.2 Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 obliges each local authority to ensure that there are sufficient primary and secondary school places available for its area i.e. the London Borough of Lewisham, although there is no requirement that those places should be exclusively in the area. The Authority is not itself obliged to provide all the schools required, but to secure that they are available.
- 8.3 In exercising its responsibilities under section 14 of the Education Act 1996 a local authority must do so with a view to securing diversity in the provision of schools and increasing opportunities for parental choice.
- 8.4 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 places requirements on local authorities to make their significant strategic decisions concerning the number and variety of school places in their localities against two overriding criteria:
- to secure schools likely to maximise student potential and achievement;
 - to secure diversity and choice in the range of school places on offer.

Section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides that where a local authority or the governing body of a maintained school proposes to make a prescribed alteration to a maintained school and it is permitted to make that alteration, it must publish proposals.

- 8.5 The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 provide that an addition of a SEN provision at a maintained school is a prescribed alteration which means that statutory proposals have to be published, and there must be a period of four weeks for representations before a decision is made. Proposals for the addition of a SEN provision at a maintained school will be determined by the local authority as decision maker.
- 8.6 The relevant Guidance advises that the Mayor as decision maker will need to be satisfied that the appropriate consultation and/or statutory representation process has been carried out and that the proposer has had regard to the responses received. The Mayor must consider all the views submitted, including all support for, objections to and comments on the proposals.
- 8.7 Any decision to add a SEN provision at Forster Park Primary School should be taken in the light of the representations received to the statutory consultation and the DfE Guidance for Decision-Makers attached at Appendix 3.
- 8.8 Decisions must be made within a period of two months of the end of the representation period or be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.

Equalities Legislation

- 8.9 The Equality Act 2010 (the Act) introduced a public sector equality duty (the equality duty or the duty). It covers the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 8.10 In summary, the Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic

and those who do not.

- 8.11 It is not an absolute requirement to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct, or to promote equality of opportunity or foster good relations between persons who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. It is a duty to have due regard to the need to achieve the goals listed at 8.10 above.
- 8.12 The weight to be attached to the duty will be dependent on the nature of the decision and the circumstances in which it is made. This is a matter for the Mayor, bearing in mind the issues of relevance and proportionality. The Mayor must understand the impact or likely impact of the decision on those with protected characteristics who are potentially affected by the decision. The extent of the duty will necessarily vary from case to case and due regard is such regard as is appropriate in all the circumstances.
- 8.13 The Equality and Human Rights Commission has issued Technical Guidance on the Public Sector Equality Duty and statutory guidance entitled "Equality Act 2010 Services, Public Functions & Associations Statutory Code of Practice". The Council must have regard to the statutory code in so far as it relates to the duty and attention is drawn to Chapter 11 which deals particularly with the equality duty. The Technical Guidance also covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty. This includes steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The guidance does not have statutory force but nonetheless regard should be had to it, as failure to do so without compelling reason would be of evidential value. The statutory code and the technical guidance can be found at:

www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-actcodes-practice

www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/equality-acttechnical-guidance

- 8.14 The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has previously issued five guides for public authorities in England giving advice on the equality duty:
- The essential guide to the public sector equality duty
 - Meeting the equality duty in policy and decision-making
 - Engagement and the equality duty: A guide for public authorities
 - Objectives and the equality duty. A guide for public authorities
 - Equality Information and the Equality Duty: A Guide for Public Authorities

- 8.15 The essential guide provides an overview of the equality duty requirements including the general equality duty, the specific duties and who they apply to. It covers what public authorities should do to meet the duty including steps that are legally required, as well as recommended actions. The other four documents provide more detailed guidance on key areas and advice on good practice. Further information and resources are available at:

www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/advice-and-guidance/public-sectorequality-duty-guidance#h1

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 This report supports the delivery of the Council's Equalities programme by ensuring that all children whose parents/carers require a place in a Lewisham school will be able to access one.
- 9.2 Specifically this report seeks to expand the SEN provision within the borough to ensure that we are best delivering for the current cohort of young people in Lewisham, and therefore ensures that we are taking due regard for their needs.

10. Climate change and environmental implications

- 10.1 The reduction in students travelling long distances to appropriate provision, and a lesser reliance on transport will have a positive benefit regarding emissions and helping tackle the climate emergency.

11. Crime and disorder implications

- 11.1 There are no crime and disorder implications.

12. Health and wellbeing implications

- 12.1 The provision of additional school places for children with ASD/SEMH within Lewisham will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of children and their families. Reducing the amount of travel that they have to endure, and also ensuring that they are educated closer to home and their home communities.

13. Appendices

- 13.1 **Appendix 1** – Copy of Proposal to add a SEN Provision at Forster Park Primary School
- 13.2 **Appendix 2** – Copy of Statutory Notice to add a SEN provision at Forster Park Primary School
- 13.3 **Appendix 3** – Statutory Guidance for Decision Makers

14. Glossary

Term	Definition
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs
Representation	Period in which people can make comments. Like consultation

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