

Proposed New ASD Designated Special School for North West Surrey

**Frequently Asked Questions and**

**responses resulting from**

**LA Consultation**

**15/11/2021-17/12/2021**

## Initial LA Consultation – Frequently Asked Questions

### Background

SCC is proposing to establish new ASD Designated Special Free School provision in the North West of the County to accommodate autistic boys and girls and those with communication and interaction needs aged 4 to 19 years. Admissions will be in line with Surrey’s SEND Admissions process ([Choosing a school place for a child with an EHCP - Surrey County Council (surreycc.gov.uk)](https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/admissions/child-with-a-ehcp)). It is envisaged that the new school will provide 176 to 200 places at full capacity. The initial Local Authority Consultation – the first step in the process of opening a new school – ran from 15 November 2021 to 17 December 2021: this document attempts to answer the most frequently asked questions raised during the consultation.

### Why has the West of Surrey been chosen as the location for the new school when there is a need for additional places in other areas as well?

Surrey County Council (SCC) commission pupil number forecasts from Edge Analytics that show projected demand for special school places over the next 10 years. These forecasts are broken down by need type, school type, phase of Education and by geographical location. Edge Analytics also provide an analysis of current trends in terms of where pupils with EHCPs live and how far they have to travel to attend their nearest most appropriate school. This data enables us to specifically target areas where there is already high demand for places or where significant growth is project to be. It has helped us identify that there is a specific need for new special school places for autistic children and young people and those with communication and interaction needs in the West of the County. Alongside planned growth to the current specialist estate, these needs can only be met in the long term by opening a new special school.

This proposal is part of the wider SEND capital programme that is in the process of delivering over 1,600 additional specialist school places across the county. For example, a new special school, Fox Grove School, opened in the South East in September 2021 and other existing schools such as Brooklands and Freemantles have or are already being expanded.

### Why will the new school be a Free School and not run by the local authority?

Since 2012 (following the Education Act 2011), where a local authority identifies the need for a new school in its area, it must seek proposals to open a new Academy. All new Academies are considered as being Free Schools. Therefore, SCC is not able to open new local authority maintained schools. However, many of the existing special schools in Surrey are Academies or Free Schools and provide good or outstanding provision as part of Surrey’s wider Specialist Education Estate.

### To encourage inclusion, would it be better to open new specialist units within mainstream schools instead of a new special school?

The proposal to open a new special school is part of a much bigger capital programme delivering additional specialist school places in a range of ways. These including new ASD designated SEN Units or Resourced Provision in mainstream Surrey’s mainstream primary and secondary schools and academies. Seven new SEN Units opened in Surrey between 2020-2021 and 9 further opportunities to expand and/ or develop new SEN Units are being explored. SEN Units in mainstream schools typically support the needs of pupils who work at broadly age-related levels and are able to access mainstream provision with their peers and additional support between 40-60% of the school day. Whereas pupils that require special school provision have significantly more complex needs and require highly specialist teaching throughout the school day to make academic as well as personal progress.

### Would the new school cater for children with ASC across the whole spectrum?

Our analysis of the data indicates that the greatest increase in demand for places is for autistic children and those with communication and interaction needs who are working at broad age-related expectations and are on track achieve academic qualifications in line with their chronological age. We believe this provision would successfully complement the other measures we have already taken to provide additional school places for autistic children and those with communication & interaction needs who have a profile of severe or more profound and multiple learning difficulties. These projects include the DfE delivered 152 place Fox Grove School and SCC delivery of the expansion of Freemantles School by 72 places, the expansion of Brooklands School by 70 places and the expansion of Manor Mead School by 60 places.