



# School Organisation Consultation

**Proposal to amalgamate Starhurst  
and St Nicholas Schools**

**February  
2016**



**SURREY**

## Introduction

1. This paper outlines a proposal for the development of specialist schools for pupils with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) and that have Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs in the east of Surrey. The process and timescales are outlined below for the amalgamation of Starhurst and St Nicholas schools.

## Background

2. Surrey's special school provision for SEMH provides for boys who are unable to manage the school environment successfully without a high level of targeted intervention to support their SEMH. Without such support, pupils are likely to present with significantly challenging behaviour. There may also be additional needs, such as communication and interaction needs.
3. Surrey County Council has commissioned three SEMH schools for secondary pupils across the Surrey area. These are Wishmore Cross Academy in Chobham, Starhurst School in Dorking and St Nicholas School in Merstham. Two of these schools, Starhurst and St Nicholas are both based in the south east quadrant of Surrey. Each school makes arrangements for pupils with SEMH needs, although historically the pupils at St Nicholas have an additional learning difficulty to their SEMH needs. Both schools are currently rated by Ofsted as 'Good' schools.
4. From September 2015 the Headteacher of St Nicholas School has been acting as Executive Head across both schools. Discussions with County Council officers, the Executive Headteacher, Chairs and Vice Chairs of Governors of each school have taken place as to the future of SEMH provision in the south east area. This has the ultimate aim of making arrangements for outstanding provision for a group of disadvantaged children and young people in Surrey.

## Proposal

5. As a result of the discussions above Surrey County Council is proposing to amalgamate St Nicholas and Starhurst Schools into one school from September 2016, based over the two current sites.
6. The eventual aim is for the school to be wholly located on one site. There will be a slight reduction over time in overall numbers from 110 to 105 pupils when the new school is re-located. From the cohort of 105 there will be places for 30 residential pupils.
7. A 105 place school would be an optimum number, offering flexibility to admit pupils throughout the key stages and enhanced nurturing in each of the year groups. The proposed groupings are outlined below:

		Class A	Class B	Class C
Key Stage 2	Year 5	5	x	x
Key Stage 2	Year 6	5	x	x
Key Stage 3	Year 7	6	6	5
Key Stage 3	Year 8	6	6	6
Key Stage 3	Year 9	7	7	6
Key Stage 4	Year 10	7	7	6
Key Stage 4	Year 11	7	7	6

## Rationale

8. Currently two schools are located relatively close to each other in the south east quadrant of Surrey and offer the same provision for pupils with SEMH. As the Schools are not located far from each other rationalising the arrangements to create one school would combine good practice from each and would develop a larger school which is more sustainable in the longer term.
9. The substantive Headteacher of St Nicholas School is currently working across both schools as an Executive Headteacher on an interim basis. This arrangement has already had benefits across both Schools. Formal amalgamation would continue to develop the arrangements with SEMH provision to provide outstanding provision for pupils.

## Pupil Placement

10. There will be no change to pupil placements. Appropriate pupils for the amalgamated school would be identified and placed using the Education Health Care Plan and subsequent review pathways. The document 'SEND admissions processes for referrals for specialist placement for school age children' describes how this process works and is available on the Surrey Local Offer website.

## Staffing and HR

11. For the first year of amalgamation there will be minimal change to staffing as both sites will be in operation as they are at the current time. In order to provide stability during the period of change it is proposed that the current Executive Headteacher remains in this post until August 2016 and becomes the Headteacher of the amalgamated school from September 2016.
12. In the longer term with the move to one site a number of staff maybe affected by the amalgamation as it is likely that there will be an impact on staffing structures. Staff at both schools have been made fully aware of the proposals and are being supported by the senior management team, together with HR and union representatives. Any formal staff consultations cannot take place until a decision has been made to proceed with this proposal.
13. With a larger school there are likely to be more opportunities for internal progression as an enhanced middle leadership level will be developed to support the senior team.

## Finance and Resourcing

14. Starhurst School is one of the smallest special schools in Surrey. It is also under-subscribed which means that there are some financial challenges in making provision for pupils that is outstanding. There is significant pressure on expenditure on Special Educational Needs and Disability provision and a duty for the authority to ensure that this funding is used to maximum effect. The amalgamation would create a larger more sustainable special school.
15. Initially the amalgamation as a 'split site school' will mean that each site will continue to function largely as they have done to date. Following the move to one site there are likely to be economies of scale obtained as there will be greater flexibility with a larger combined budget to deploy staff and curriculum resources more effectively.
16. There would be a reduction in Home to School transport costs. Currently pupils who attend the same type of provision and live in the same area are transported to two different locations. In the future more effective transport solutions could be sought.

## Capital planning and buildings

17. For the initial year of amalgamation the school would operate as a 'split site school', across the two existing sites in Dorking and Merstham. Consideration is being given to the physical amalgamation of the school on one site at some time beyond that point, which would mean the closure of one of the current sites.
18. Distinct from the above, there is a need for additional mainstream secondary school places in the Reigate, Redhill and Merstham area from September 2017 onwards. In line with this demand, a bid was submitted by GLF Schools to establish a new, 900-place secondary Free School in the area. The Council, in partnership with the Education Funding Agency, is currently exploring potential sites for the location of this new school, with the existing St Nicholas School site the preferred option in this respect.
19. Owing to the potential proximity of these schemes (in terms of both time and location), the Council commissioned a Viability Study to consider the above issues in detail. The initial conclusion in relation to the proposal to physically amalgamate the St Nicholas and Starhurst schools, is that the Starhurst site would be the most suitable to develop in this respect, with the site size being closely aligned with that recommended by national guidelines. A detailed Feasibility Study is being carried out by consultants with oversight from an experienced Project Manager. No formal decision as to the future location of the proposed amalgamated school will be made until such time as this Feasibility Study has been completed and agreed with Governors at both schools, in order that an informed decision can be made in this respect. Governors and the local authority are committed to working together in partnership and to thereby achieving the best possible buildings solution, within the financial envelope and in line with national guidelines for school buildings.
20. The capital project is a major undertaking and is being led by a Project Manager who will establish design consultation opportunities, so as to ensure that the design meets the aspirations of the school community. The Project Manager would also lead on the move from one site to the other.

## **Consultations, approvals and overall timescales**

21. It is proposed that the schools are amalgamated from 1 September 2016. The proposed changes are described as “prescribed alterations” and require a period of consultation, the publication of statutory Notices and the agreement of Surrey County Council’s Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement if the proposal is to proceed.
22. The first stage of consultation will be informal and is proposed to run until 12 noon on Tuesday 8 March 2016. During this period the Surrey County Council will share its proposals with the wider professional network, schools including headteachers and chairs of governors, with unions, parent representatives, partner agencies and with the staff and parents of the school subject to “prescribed alterations”.
23. Following the informal consultation period it is proposed to publish a Statutory Notice for a 4 week period. The publication of Notices is when the local authority formally states that it intends to implement the proposed changes. This will be the final opportunity for consultees to make their views known before a final decision is taken. Following the consultation periods officers will summarise the feedback and will report to the Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement Learning in May 2016.

## Have your say

Surrey County Council, Starhurst and St Nicholas Schools would like to know what people in the area feel about the proposal. The consultation will open on Monday 8 February 2016.

You can respond by:

- a) Accessing the consultation online on the 'Surrey Says' website: [www.surreysays.co.uk](http://www.surreysays.co.uk) and searching for the school's consultation (school name or post code), or by scrolling through the list of open consultations.
- b) Completing the consultation response form that is available alongside this document. You can email the form or print it, complete it and send it back to the address below.

Julie Beckett (Amalgamation of Starhurst and St Nicholas Schools)  
Room 326  
County Hall  
Penrhyn Road  
Kingston upon Thames  
KT1 2DJ

FAO Julie Beckett (Amalgamation of Starhurst and St Nicholas Schools) to:  
[schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk)

All responses must be received by noon on Noon Tuesday 8 March

## What happens next?

We will hold public meetings for parents and any other interested parties at each school site to discuss the proposals and to hear the views that people have. As a public meeting, anyone who wishes to may attend. These meetings will be:

**11.45am on Monday 22 February at St Nicholas School**  
**1.30pm on Friday 26 February at Starhurst School**

Everyone is welcome to attend the meeting and there is no need to pre-register your attendance. Please come and share your views. You do not have to have a child at the school to come to the meeting.

At the end of the consultation period, we will review all of the responses received and share these with the school and publish them on the Surrey Says website.

Subject to the outcome of the consultation we intent to publish a Statutory Notice on Monday 14 March, at the school, in a local newspaper and on the Surrey Says website stating our intention to change the age range of the school. There will be a 4 week statutory consultation period for further representations to be received by the council. This consultation period is due to end at noon on Tuesday 12 April 2016.

All representations will be reviewed before a final decision is taken by the Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement in May 2016.