

School Organisation Consultation Questions and Answers

Proposal to expand and change the designation of the SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary from a designation of MLD to a designation of ASD

November 2022



Background:

Surrey County Council with support from The Governing Body of Ashford Park Primary School are proposing to expand the SEN unit (known as The Acorn Centre) at Ashford Park Primary School from 21 to 25 places and change the designation from MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulties) to a designation of ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder). All pupils will have an EHCP specifying the school as an appropriate placement to meet their individual needs.

The SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary has a designation of MLD. In July 2018 a decision was made at the [Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning meeting](#) to expand the SEN Unit from 16 to 25 places. Due to the low numbers of pupils in Year R (Reception) to Year 2 requiring a MLD designated specialist school place and the increased demand for specialist school places for autistic pupils and those with communication needs the local authority agreed with the school for the infant year groups to be available for autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs. Current capacity constraints mean that the physical space required for a 25 place SEN Unit has not increased and therefore the existing provision can only accommodate a maximum of 21 planned places.

This consultation is a proposal to secure places for autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs by changing the designation of the SEN Unit from MLD to ASD. The SEN Unit will expand from 21 planned places to 25 planned places. A feasibility study has informed the development approach required to repurpose, remodel and expand the SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary School to ensure long-term sustainability.

This document is a Question and Answer document addressing questions that have been asked during the consultation period.

| | Question | Response |
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| 1. | Where in the school is the proposed new building? | The Acorn Centre will move into a new block/modular building which will be built within the school site. The current classrooms will be repurposed and remodelled. |
| 2. | What building work is needed? Will there be any disruption? | <p>A feasibility study has informed the development approach required to repurpose, remodel and expand the centre at Ashford Park Primary School to ensure long-term sustainability.</p> <p>The majority of the building works will take place over the summer holidays to ensure minimal disruption to pupils and staff. The project team will work closely with school staff to keep staff, parents and pupils informed of plans and timelines.</p> |
| 3. | Why is a new building required for the Acorn Centre? | A feasibility study has been completed to ensure correct capacity for a formal change in designation to support autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs. |

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| | | <p>The SEN Unit expanded in Sept 2018 from 16 places to 21 places but there was no additional building work at that time. The mainstream Published Admission Number (PAN) had already expanded in 2015 from 2 form to 3 form entry and only reached capacity with 3 forms across each year group in 2021 therefore there was some additional capacity across the school until September 2021. Temporary accommodation is in place until the proposed building is completed.</p> |
| 4. | <p>What will happen to the existing Junior children in the unit who have a primary need of MLD?</p> | <p>There is no planned change for existing pupils at the school. Pupils with a primary need of MLD will continue their primary school education at The Acorn Centre at Ashford Park Primary and will receive the level of support as outlined in their EHCP plan.</p> <p>Any changes in a pupils needs would be considered as part of the annual review of their EHCP according to the SEND Code of Practice and is not impacted by this proposal.</p> |
| 5. | <p>Where will children with a primary need of MLD, who need a specialist provision in the local area attend school in the future?</p> | <p>Forecasts across the north east and north west of Surrey indicate that the demand for MLD places is decreasing.</p> <p>Pupils with a primary need of MLD may be supported within their local mainstream school, a SEN Unit in a mainstream school or a Special School. The nearest mainstream school with an MLD SEN Unit is The Hythe, 3 miles from Ashford Park Primary.</p> |
| 6. | <p>Will there be any change to the provision or way in which the children in the unit are currently supported?</p> | <p>Autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs are already supported as pupils of The Acorn Centre at Ashford Park Primary School. The consultation formalises the offer so the places will be available for autistic pupils in the future.</p> |
| 7. | <p>Will all children at the school benefit from the SEN Unit?</p> | <p>Developing a sustainable offer to support autistic pupils and those with communication needs will benefit the whole school. The Acorn Centre is part of Ashford Park Primary School under the same leadership and governance.</p> <p>The school will continue to support all pupils in the school, and all staff will benefit from shared learning and resources that will influence how pupils are supported across the school.</p> <p>All pupils attending the SEN Unit will have been allocated a place through the Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP process). Pupils will be allocated a place at the SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary by Surrey County Council's SEND Admissions Team.</p> |

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| | | Please see the School Admissions Guidance for children with an EHCP for more information. |
| 8. | How much learning and integration do children in the SEN Unit experience in mainstream classes? | The Acorn Centre offers opportunities for autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs who would benefit from spending approximately 40-60% of their school day each week in mainstream classes with support. This enables meaningful inclusion into the mainstream classes which is wholly individualised to the needs of the pupil. Some pupils may spend more time in the Acorn Centre than others and it would be the responsibility of the school to manage the specialist offer and inclusion levels in partnership with the parents and Local Authority officers. |