

Statutory Notice

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



School Organisation Statutory Notice

Notice is given in accordance with section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, as amended by the Education Act 2011, and The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 that Surrey County Council, intends to make a significant change to **Ashford Park Primary School** by expanding the SEN (Special Educational Needs) Unit from 21 to 25 places and changing the designation from MLD to ASD¹.

Local Authority Details:

Local Authority	Surrey County Council
Address	Quadrant Court 35 Guildford Road Woking GU22 7QQ

School Details:

Name of School	Ashford Park Primary School
Phase of School	Mainstream Primary School with an SEN Unit
Type of School	Community School
URN	125113
Address	Station Crescent, Staines-upon-Thames, Ashford
Postcode	TW15 3HN

Introduction

This paper outlines a proposal to expand the SEN unit at Ashford Park Primary School from 21 to 25 places and change the designation from MLD to a designation of ASD.

This document explains the proposed process and timescales to expand and change the designation of the SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary School.

Proposal

Surrey County Council with the support of the Governing Body of Ashford Park Primary School are proposing to expand the SEN Unit from 21 places to 25 places and to change the designation from MLD to ASD.

Table 1 shows the proposed timeline for the changes to take place on 1 September 2023. Dates and steps in the timeline may change based on the outcome of this consultation.

Table 1: Proposed timeline

Phase	Date
Statutory notices	Nov / Dec 2022
Lead Cabinet Member Decision	Jan 2023
Expansion and refurbishment/changes to existing space	March – August 2023

¹ Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is the term used by the Department for Education (DfE) as the school designation that meets the needs of autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs. Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) is the DfE school designation, known locally in Surrey as Learning and Additional Needs (LAN).

Implementation

1 September 2023

It is proposed that:

1. The designation of the SEN Unit (known as The Acorn Centre) at Ashford Park Primary School, changes from MLD (known locally in Surrey as Learning and Additional Needs (LAN)) to a designation of ASD (school designation for autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs).
2. The SEN Unit will expand from 21 places to 25 places to allow an additional intake in Key Stage 2. There will be 9 places in Year R to Year 2 and an extra intake of 1 place at the key stage transfer in in Year 3 to create 16 places in Year 3 to Year 6.
3. There will be no change to the mainstream provision. The 25 planned places at the SEN Unit would be in addition to the mainstream Planned Admission Numbers (PAN). This complies with The School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 as pupils will spend at least 50% of their time in The Acorn Centre (The SEN Unit).
4. All pupils placed at the SEN Unit by Surrey County Council would have an EHCP specifying the school as an appropriate placement to meet their individual needs. Further details on the admissions process for SEND specialist provision in Surrey can be found on the [Surrey Local Offer website](#). 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 County Council website.
5. 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.

Making Representations, Objections and Comments

1. This is a four week consultation which starts on Monday 14 November 2022 and concludes on Monday 12 December 2022.
2. A number of organisations are available locally to support families of children who have special educational needs and/ or disabilities (SEND) and young people who have SEND to share their views. Please see [Information, Advice and Support – SEND Advice Surrey](#).
3. Any person can make comments, agree, or object to the proposal by sending representations to the Local authority through the following channels:

Website	www.surreysays.co.uk
Email	schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk
Post	Jane Keenan Education Place Planning Surrey County Council Quadrant Court 35 Guildford Road Woking GU22 7AH

Background

Ashford Park Primary School is a 3-form entry primary school with a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Unit in the borough of Spelthorne in Surrey. The school was rated 'Good' by Ofsted in a full inspection in December 2014 and sustained a 'Good' in a short inspection in September 2018.

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. The existing provision can only accommodate a maximum of 21 pupils and therefore there are currently 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.

Table 2: Number of Pupils on roll at Ashford Park Primary School by National Curriculum Year (NCY) Group (September 2022)

	Year R	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
Number of pupils currently at Ashford Park Primary School	92	91	89	89	88	91	82	615

School Vision and Curriculum

More information about the school's vision and curriculum can be found at the school website [Ashford Park Primary School](#)

Current Special Educational Needs provision

The SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary currently has 21 places and a designation of MLD.

The school have been committed to meeting the special educational needs of pupils and ensuring that they make good progress.

Due to the low numbers of pupils in Year R 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. Although the places in the Junior year groups remained available for pupils with MLD, historically when there has been space and the pupils' needs can be met by the school, autistic pupils and those with communication needs who have attended the SEN Unit in the infant year groups have transitioned to the Junior Year groups of the SEN Unit.

In Sept 2022 there are 10 pupils attending the SEN Unit in Year R to Year 2. A SEN Unit for autistic pupils and those with communication needs has been identified as part of their EHCP. As some pupils have moved up from Year 2 to Year 3, there is currently a mix of autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs, and pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) in Year 3 to Year 6. There are 13 pupils in Year 3 to 6 85% have a diagnosis of communication and interaction needs 15% of pupils in Year 3 to 6 have a diagnosis of MLD.

What do we want to achieve?

The aim of the proposal is to expand and change the designation of the SEN unit (The Acorn Centre) at Ashford Park Primary School, from a designation of MLD to ASD. This will secure places for autistic pupils and those with communication needs.

What will be provided through the SEN Unit?

Pupils attending Ashford Park Primary would be in addition to the mainstream Planned Admission Number (PAN) of the school, as there is an expectation that a minimum of 50% of the school day would be spent in the Acorn Centre. This would enable 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.

Curriculum and Educational Offer

The SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary School, known as The Acorn Centre, will provide Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision for autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs from Reception to Year 6

Pupils will spend around 60% of the school day in the Acorn Centre. The remaining 40% of the time will be spent in their mainstream class, accessing the mainstream curriculum, alongside their peers. Their school day will start at 8:40am and will end at 3:15pm. Pupils will be supported in a group of up to 3 in their mainstream class by a Learning Support Assistant (LSA) in Reception and Key Stage 1, and up to 4 in Key Stage 2.

The Acorn Centre will continue to offer specialist teaching of literacy, numeracy, Personal Social Health and Economic (PSHE), social skills and life skills. Pupils will spend the mornings in the centre covering these subjects, equating to around 1 hour of literacy and 1 hour of numeracy. The remainder of the time in the Centre will be spent covering PSHE, social skills, life skills and time for interventions. In the afternoon, pupils will be included with their mainstream class, covering science and foundation subjects; approximately 2 hours a day.

Pupils will have access to a broad and balanced curriculum which is personalised to meet their needs. The Acorn Centre will continue to run a three-year rolling curriculum using key themes and quality text as a vehicle to teach literacy and numeracy alongside scaffolds and programs to support the children's learning, such as Colourful Semantics and Numicon. Other autism-specific strategies and interventions will be implemented including Attention Autism, Intensive Interaction, TEACCH®, comic-strip conversations, social stories, Lego-based therapy, Emotional Regulation and Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS®). Pupils will receive these interventions as necessary. These will sometimes be outlined in their EHCPs.

Centre staff will continue to receive support and advice from professionals, including speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and educational psychologists to help support pupils. Some of this support will include on-site sessions for pupils and training for staff.

A regular programme of exercise is offered to all the pupils. Professionals from other agencies including physiotherapy, occupational therapy and health are welcomed to the school to support pupils with specific needs and their advice is incorporated into individual plans.

Staff

The staff team in the Acorn Centre include experienced members who have worked with autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs for a number of years. The Acorn centre manager has a specialism in working with autistic pupils. All staff have had either internal or external training on autism-specific strategies including Attention Autism Bucket, PECS®, TEACCH® and social stories. They have also had training and experience in other appropriate strategies and approaches including comic strip conversations, colourful semantics and Zones of Regulation.

By changing the designation from MLD to a designation of ASD, staff can focus their professional development on continuing to progress their knowledge and understanding in how best to support autistic pupils and those with communication needs. This will also benefit the whole school, as staff can share their expertise and resources.

Reasons for the expansion and change of designation of the SEN unit at Ashford Park Primary School.

Surrey County Council has identified a long term sufficiency gap for additional specialist places across Surrey. Demand for specialist provision in the North East of Surrey for autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs is high. As a result, other specialist provision in the local area are operating at or above capacity. The provision of an additional 16 places, will help support local families who would otherwise have to travel further afield for their child to receive an appropriate full-time education. The proposed expansion and change in designation at Ashford Park Primary SEN Unit will increase availability of specialist places that are matched appropriately to need-type, phases of education and geographic location, as well as reduce home to school journey times and associated costs.

SEN Units with a designation of ASD in Mainstream Schools support autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs whose additional needs are such that they are able to spend approximately 50% of the taught curriculum in mainstream classes with support. This type of provision supports pupils who benefit from the specialist support of the SEN unit while accessing inclusion in mainstream classes. By developing local specialist provision, children can learn and flourish in their own community and be part of a familiar setting which supports their unique way of learning.

Demand data for both Special Schools and SEN Units is included in the graphs below. There are fewer SEN Unit places than Special School places and pupils tend to attend SEN Units closer to home. Where SEN Unit and special school places are not available autistic pupils and those with communication & interaction needs may be placed out of county or in non-maintained independent schools. Therefore the data shown below is forecasting the number of pupils who need a specialist place either in an SEN Unit or Special School.

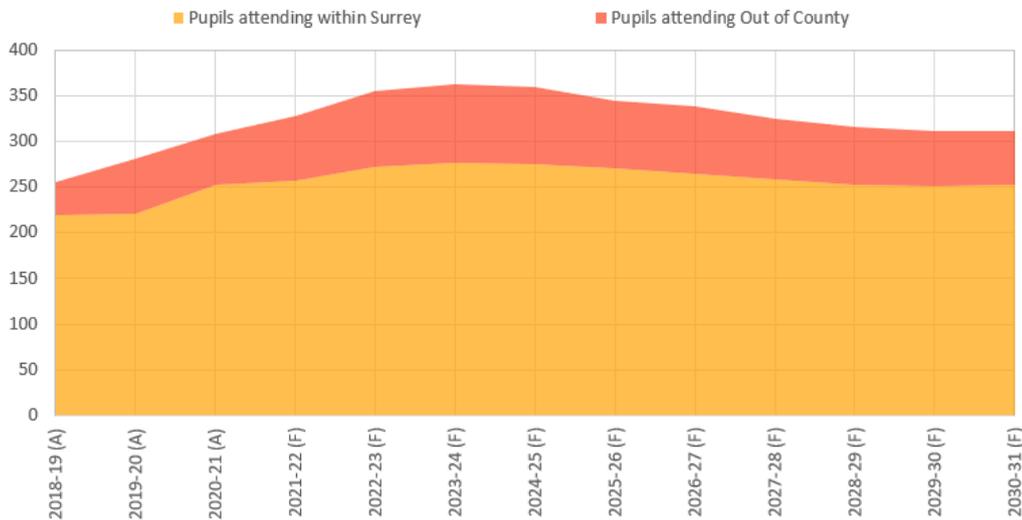
In academic year 2020-2021, 1190 of Surrey resident pupils aged 4-11 years old who are autistic or have communication & interaction needs attended SEN Units or specialist schools. 13% of this cohort were placed out of county due to a lack of placement availability in Surrey. Latest sufficiency modelling projects growth of 15% from 1190 in 2020-21 to 1368 in 2025-2026.

In academic year 2020-2021, 149 of Surrey resident pupils aged 4-11 years old who have a primary need of Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) attended SEN Units or specialist schools. 8% of this cohort were placed out of county. Latest sufficiency modelling projects decreasing demand of -45% from 149 in 2020-21 to 82 in 2029-2030.

Autistic pupils and those with communication and interaction needs

Graph 1 shows that North East projections indicate 17% growth in the total number of autistic pupils and those with communication & interaction needs, with EHCPs who need a specialist school or SEN unit place from 2020-21 (309) to the peak in 2023-24 (363), with 12% growth remaining in 2025/26 (345).

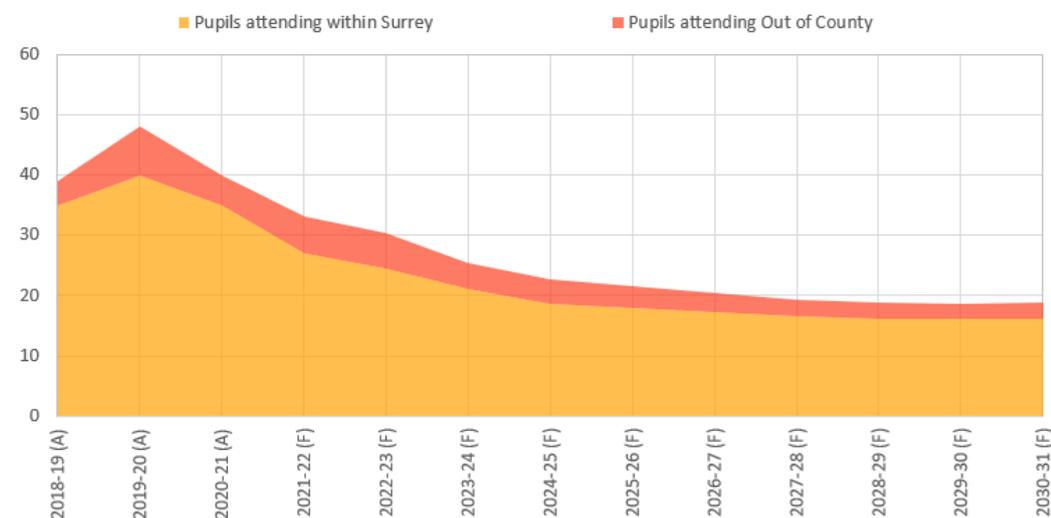
Graph 1: North East - Forecast of demand for special school and SEN Unit places from Year R to Year 6 for pupils with an EHCP with a primary need of autism or communication and interaction needs



Pupils with a primary need of Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)

Graph 2 shows that North East projections indicate -53% decrease in demand in the total number of pupils with the primary need Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) in their EHCP, who need a specialist school or SEN unit place from 2020-21 (40) to 19 in 2030/31 (19).

Graph 2: North East - Forecast of demand for special school and SEN Unit places from Year R to Year 6 for pupils with an EHCP with a primary need of Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD)



ASD and MLD SEN Unit provision in Surrey

More details of our specialist provision can be found in the booklet “Finding the right primary school in Surrey” on the [Surrey Local Offer website](#).

Table 3 provides a summary of 8 SEN Units designated to meet the needs of autistic pupils and those with communication & interaction as their primary presenting needs.

Table 3: Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) Designated SEN Units in Mainstream Schools in Surrey

School	Designation	District	Planned Places	Age Range	Planned Expansion under Surrey's SEND Capital Programme
Ashford Park Primary School	ASD/MLD	Spelthorne	21	4 – 11 years old	
Meadhurst Primary School	ASD	Spelthorne	29	4 – 11 years old	
Sunbury Manor School	Speech & Language	Spelthorne	20	11 – 16 Yrs old	
Bell Farm Primary School	ASD	Elmbridge	21	4 – 11 years old	
Chandlers Field Primary School	ASD	Elmbridge	18	4 – 11 years old	Growing to capacity of 25 places by 2024/25
Three Rivers Academy	ASD	Elmbridge	18	11 – 16 years old	Growing to capacity of 30 places by 2024/25
The Orchard Infant School	Speech & Language	Elmbridge	6	4 – 7 years old	
Hinchley Wood School	ASD (Cullum Centre)	Elmbridge	20	11 – 16 years old	
Thames Ditton Junior School	MLD	Elmbridge	16	7 – 11 years old	
Cuddington Community Primary School	ASD	Epsom & Ewell	14	4 – 11 years old	
Epsom Primary and Nursery School	ASD	Epsom & Ewell	12	4 – 11 years old	Growing to capacity of 21 places by 2025/26

Key Outcomes and Benefits

Expanding Outstanding sufficient and sustainable special school provision for Surrey resident primary age pupils in Spelthorne will provide the following benefits as stated in the [Developing local Special Educational Needs and Disability \(SEND\) Provision](#) report to Cabinet on 25 January 2022:

1. Benefits realisation ensures Surrey's maintained specialist education provision is fit for purpose and creates additional employment/supported internship opportunities for residents around areas of expansion.
2. Children, young people, and families can access the same level of high-quality support wherever they live in Surrey. We have a good, shared understanding of our children and young people who have SEND in Surrey and our support offer matches their identified needs.
3. Expanding Surrey's specialist provision aligns with the Preparation for Adulthood programme and strategy for Post-16 to create local further education and employment pathways such as apprenticeships and supported internships. This enables young people who have SEND to make a successful transition to adulthood and secure employment.
4. Capacity created locally will also make certain that SEND home to school transport distance and costs are reduced so that pupils attend their closest most appropriate school with shorter journey times. Opportunities for developing independent travel skills can be maximised as a result of children and young people being educated closer to home. This will also address local congestion around school sites as well as traffic flow around the county, which will be of benefit to Surrey's Green Agenda
5. The distribution and occupancy of current Special Schools and SEN Units in mainstream schools clearly illustrates that there is insufficient provision of Autism and Communication & Social Interaction Needs, Moderate Learning Difficulties, Severe Learning Difficulties and Social Emotional Mental Health Needs Special places.
6. The approved remedification and expansion programme will ensure that additional places are matched appropriately to need type, phases of education and geographic locations.

An Equality Impact Assessment is being completed throughout the consultation process and will be published as part of the Lead Cabinet Member Decision Meeting.

Implementation Plan

Finance and Resourcing

Revenue income: Ashford Park Primary School will receive £6,000 per year for each agreed planned place commissioned (25 places). The school will also receive a "Top up" sum for each pupil in attendance. Top up rates are reviewed annually by the Local Authority.

Staffing

The set up and running of the provision of the SEN unit within the school would be led and managed by a strong existing team at Ashford Park Primary School.

Capital planning and buildings

The Capital project is part of Phase 4 of the SEND Capital Programme agreed by Surrey County Council Cabinet on 25 January 2022. The expansion will be provided onsite at the school. 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.

Growth Model

It is proposed that there will be 25 places available in September 2023 (3 in each year group from Year R to Year 2 and 4 in each year group from Year 3 to Year 6). There will be an intake of 3 places in reception each year. The table below shows how the SEN Unit will grow from September 2022 to full capacity in September 2026. The growth model may change depending on timescales and the outcome of the property feasibility study.

Table 4: Growth Model for the SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary School (Autistic Pupils and those with communication and interaction needs)

Academic Year	Numbers of learners per National Curriculum Year Group							
	NCY 0	NCY 1	NCY 2	NCY 3	NCY 4	NCY 5	NCY 6	TOTAL
2023-2024	3	3	3	4	3	3	2	21
2024-2025	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	23
2025-2026	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	24
2026-2027	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	25
TOTAL	Year on Year availability							

Table 5: Growth Model for the SEN Unit at Ashford Park Primary School (Pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD))

Academic Year	Numbers of learners per National Curriculum Year Group							
	NCY 0	NCY 1	NCY 2	NCY 3	NCY 4	NCY 5	NCY 6	TOTAL
2023-2024					1	0	1	2
2024-2025						1	0	1
2025-2026							1	1
TOTAL	Year on Year availability							

Consultations, approvals, and overall timescales

1. It is proposed that the SEN unit commences from 1 September 2023. The proposed changes require a period of consultation, the publication of Statutory Notices and the agreement of Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Education and Learning if the proposal is to proceed.
2. The first stage of consultation was open from 27 September 2022 to 6 November 2022. During this period the Surrey County Council shared 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 the proposals. The associated documentation was published on the Surrey County Council 'Surrey Says' website and circulated to local stakeholders. Interested parties were invited to return responses to the consultation via an online form or alternatively email or post responses.
3. The consultation analysis is published at www.surreysays.co.uk on the Statutory Notice webpage alongside this document.

Key points from the consultation responses:

- There were **9** responses to the consultation
 - **100%** of respondents **agreed** with the proposal
 - Respondents commented on the **positive impacts** for children and young people and the school
4. Statutory Notice is now open for a four-week period from 14 November to 12 December. 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 period officers will summarise the feedback and will report to the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning.

What happens next?

You can make representations, objections and comments using the online form at www.surreysays.co.uk. Alternatively, you can respond by email or post at the addresses given in the section [Making Representations, Objections and Comments](#).