

School Organisation Consultation

**Questions and Answers from the Public
Meeting about the proposal to remove
the boarding provision at Sunnydown
School**

May 2021



Special Educational Provision at Sunnydown School:

Sunnydown School is a single sex, local authority maintained, residential special school in Caterham for boys aged 11-16 years. The school provides highly specialist teaching and support for pupils with a diagnosis of Autism, as well as those with identified social communication & interaction needs. The Department for Education ASD school designation is known locally in Surrey as High COIN.

Pupils who attend Sunnydown School are academically able, with many obtaining top GCSE grades across a wide range of subjects. The broad range of opportunities presented throughout the school day for developing resilience and emerging belief in their own abilities enables the pupils to be encouraged, enabled, and empowered for a successful life beyond Sunnydown. The school has a 'Good' Ofsted rating from the most recent inspection on 12 July 2016.

Proposal:

Surrey County Council (SCC) is proposing to remove the boarding provision at Sunnydown School from the end of term in July 2021.

Should the proposal be agreed, it will provide the school and SCC with future opportunities to expand the day provision so there are more specialist school places for children and young people who have SEND to attend their nearest most appropriate school in Surrey. Any future plans to make further changes to the school will be subject to a separate consultation process.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Response							
<p>What is the demand for boarding provision at Sunnydown School?</p>	<p>There is an appetite for boarding provision and it does benefit the pupils on roll; however, it is being utilised by pupils without a statutory entitlement.</p> <p>None of the current pupils on roll at Sunnydown School have direct or deemed special educational provision, health provision or social care provision in the form of boarding or that beyond usual school hours specified or quantified in Sections, F, G or H of their Education, Health or Care Plans.</p> <p>The total number of beds have not been used at 100% capacity operating at approximately 75% capacity. During Covid-19, the residential provision has operated at approximately 50% capacity. This was a strategic decision made by the leaders of Sunnydown to continue to give pupils the opportunity to board, while maintaining a Covid-secure and safe environment as possible.</p> <p>The 24 pupils who currently access boarding in any capacity (a majority of boarders are not full time, even outside of Covid restrictions), represents approximately 27% of the total number of pupil who attend Sunnydown School.</p> <p>The table below shows how the uptake of boarding provision has decreased year on year:</p>							
<p>Academic Year</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td data-bbox="284 2033 432 2098">2013-2014</td> <td data-bbox="438 2033 587 2098">2014-2015</td> <td data-bbox="593 2033 742 2098">2015-2016</td> <td data-bbox="748 2033 896 2098">2016-2017</td> <td data-bbox="903 2033 1051 2098">2017-2018</td> <td data-bbox="1058 2033 1206 2098">2018-2019</td> <td data-bbox="1212 2033 1316 2098">2019-2020</td> </tr> </table>	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020		

Number of beds	33	33	33	33	23	23	23
% Occupancy	81	90	87	79	72	76	76
Approximate Number of boarders	27	30	29	26	16.5	17	17

Why is the boarding provision not being phased out over the next couple of years?

There have been ongoing discussions between SCC and Sunnydown School about the non-statutory provision for boarding since 2014. This was because not all of the boys on roll at the school can, need to or do board.

The boarding provision is funded through the High Needs Block and there is pressure on this budget in Surrey due to the very high number of children and young people who have special educational needs and/ or disabilities across the county.

Surrey receives a set allocation of funding for high needs from the Government to support the local area in meeting all of its statutory responsibilities for children and young people with SEND, determined by the Children and Families Act 2014. As is the case with other local authorities nationally, the budget allocated doesn't cover all of the statutory provision and services that are needed to meet the total of local demand.

The decision to formally consult on the removal of boarding in July 2021 was agreed between the school and SCC at the beginning of February 2021, along with initial discussions around future opportunities to expand the day provision at the school through utilising and adapting existing space that is currently used for boarding.

Surrey County Council considered multiple options for the proposal but felt that implementing the consultation in line with the academic year would minimise disruption to pupils and their families.

Prior to Covid, was boarding used to maximum capacity?

No. Prior to Covid, the care staff at Sunnydown School worked with the families of pupils at the school to increase the numbers on roll in the boarding provision to help with the sustainability of the provision through trying to maintain accommodation above 70% capacity. At 60% occupancy each night, the school breaks even financially. On any night of the week where the boarding occupancy drops below 60%, the school has to utilise funds from the main school budget.

Please can you explain about the boarding being underutilised? I understood that occupancy of 50%

It was a strategic decision to limit occupancy to 50% maximum during the last year to ensure social distancing aligned with mandatory Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. Surrey County Council has supported the

<p>over the last year was due to Covid, not lack of demand.</p>	<p>school to maintain the boarding provision during this time.</p>
<p>Please could you share facts about the bigger picture of special school provision in Surrey?</p>	<p>Surrey County Council has one of the largest EHCP cohorts in the country (over 10,920), and demand for specialist school places is increasing. Historically, the size of the specialist school estate has not matched the needs locally, so SCC has had to rely on out-of-county placements and non-maintained independent school provision to meet this demand. In 2019 Surrey initiated a programme of specialist place planning to ensure that there are enough specialist school places year on year that are matched appropriately to SEN need-type, phases of education and geographic locations across the county.</p> <p>SCC is delivering a Cabinet approved combined capital investment programme of £79.6m to create over 1,600 new specialist school places in Surrey over the next 5 years. This will be achieved through the development of new build and Free School schemes to expand maintained special school provision. The programme is also creating new SEN Units in primary and secondary schools through utilising and adapting undersubscribed mainstream schools and SCC owned assets. Over 1,000 of the new specialist school places are for children or young people who have autism or social communication & interaction needs.</p> <p>As an example of demand for specialist school places, this year there were 68 applications for 16 places for Year 7 admissions at Sunnydown School. Less than 30% of pupils on roll at the school access the boarding provision. If the consultation to remove the boarding provision is agreed, Surrey County Council and the school are committed to exploring the possibility of expanding the day provision.</p>
<p>Is this a done deal?</p>	<p>No – this statutory consultation is about whether Surrey County Council should remove the boarding provision at Sunnydown School. The Cabinet Member for All Age Learning will make the final decision in July 2021. This will be based on the feedback from the informal and statutory consultations, as well as the wider context detail, including the need for a more efficient use of resources and the increasing demand for specialist school places.</p> <p>The Cabinet Member for All Age Learning may approve or reject the proposal or approve the proposal with modifications or subject to conditions.</p>
<p>Is this a reaction to Surrey County Council's financial deficit and a cost cutting exercise?</p>	<p>The aim of this consultation is to repurpose funds that are currently used to maintain a non-statutory provision, to increase the availability of statutory provision for children and young people with SEND who have the highest needs in the county.</p>

	<p>Funding for SEND provision is currently overspent which puts a greater pressure on council reserves. Surrey County Council is investing £79.6m capital to provide 1,600 new specialist school places closer to home. This will enable better outcomes, with more children and young people who have SEND attending their nearest most appropriate school and better connected to local communities and support services.</p>
<p>When did Surrey County Council recognise that its SEN provision was falling behind demand?</p> <p>How many new SEND schools are being opened as part of this plan?</p>	<p>Surrey's Cabinet approved the first phase of SEND Capital investment in September 2019. There are three new ASD special schools being built in Surrey. Two of these are being delivered by the Department for Education (Fox Grove Academy and Betchwood Vale Academy) and one which is funded by SCC.</p> <p>Twenty-four special school expansions are in process and SCC is also creating 6 new ASD SEN Units in mainstream primary and secondary schools.</p>
<p>Would the capital investment also be used to fund further support for SEND children in post 16 education?</p>	<p>Yes. Six of the special school expansion projects include additional Post 16 provision.</p>
<p>Will Surrey publish its geographical, development and capacity plans before terminating current provision? Short term gain without understanding the long-term issues and impacts to the boys</p>	<p>Following the introduction of The Children and Families Act, 2014 and revised SEND Code of Practice in 2015, Surrey has seen the number of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) increase by between 11-18% each year, resulting in the projected demand for 5,100 specialist school places. Surrey's ambition is to ensure sufficient maintained placement availability for the cohort of children and young people who have SEND and need specialist placements.</p> <p>Current plans for expansion and development approved by Cabinet are available to the public and published on the SCC website: Surrey County Council - Browse meetings - Cabinet (surreycc.gov.uk) and Surrey's Local Offer website: Surrey County Council SEN capital funding plans and consultations Surrey Local Offer</p>
<p>To what degree have you considered the effect that this could have on the outcomes on this cohort of pupils. Ofsted rated the boarding provision 'Outstanding' due to resilience, independence etc being built by the pupils attending.</p> <p>One year of COVID has already had a huge effect and the boarding provision contributes hugely to this. So we need more for these children not less!</p>	<p>Sunnydown School's boarding provision was rated as Good by Ofsted in February 2016 and the team have built it up since then. In the last inspection (February 2020), for the first time since then, it was awarded Outstanding in all categories.</p> <p>Sunnydown's school provision was last inspected in summer 2016 and was rated Good. The Ofsted inspection regime and school have changed substantially since then and the school's leadership team and Governing Body are very confident that the day provision offers outstanding education.</p> <p>Prior to Covid, Sunnydown ranked inside the top 10 Special Schools nationally (out of approximately 1400) for academic progress (Progress 8). This included pupils that accessed boarding as well as those that</p>

	<p>did not. There is no statistical evidence to indicate that boarders performed better academically than day students. It is recognised however that pupils who board are able to complete their homework at school with supervision from staff (seldom a class teacher) and this may alleviate some pressures from home.</p> <p>The day provision at Sunnydown School provides excellent opportunities for all pupils to develop and enhance their holistic life skills.</p>
<p>Is it possible to add residential into an EHCP?</p>	<p>A child or young person’s special educational needs and the provision to meet those needs would need to be reassessed before any changes are made to an EHCP following Annual Review. It is not possible for residential provision to be added in to an existing EHCP without a reassessment of needs.</p>
<p>Section F can specify residential accommodation if appropriate. It is not logical to state that the residential care is not needed, it may be that it just has not been specified on the EHCP, possibly because it is known that admission to Sunnydown is at the discretion of the school. Residential care is NOT simply in the domain of the Care and Health elements of the plan (SEN Code of Practice 2015). If it ‘educates and trains’, it can be stipulated in Section F.</p>	<p>There would need to be an assessed need for direct or deemed special educational provision, health provision or social care provision in the form of boarding or that beyond usual school hours specified or quantified in Section F of an EHCP. This isn’t the case with any of the pupils who currently access the non-statutory boarding provision at Sunnydown School.</p>
<p>The boarding provision was graded outstanding by Ofsted– why take it away? You’re removing an essential provision.</p>	<p>Day provision at Sunnydown is also excellent. Pupils benefit from boarding but if the decision is made to remove boarding, day provision will continue to be the success that it is. Sunnydown, like other special schools, focuses on the personal development of individual pupils as well as delivering the specialised school curriculum. The school will work with Surrey County Council to create social opportunities for pupils, should the proposal to remove the boarding provision be agreed.</p> <p>In 2015 the School’s Vision and Mission were reviewed and as a result of wide consultation, aspects of personal development such as Resilience, Independence and Cooperation were written into these strategic aims of the school. Since then, the day curriculum has been enhanced to increase opportunities for all pupils to develop these important life skills. For example, the PSHE and thought for the week curriculum are intertwined and designed to cover National Curriculum Expectations, but to be flexible enough to respond to local situations, or current events.</p> <p>In 2019 the Vision and Mission were again reviewed and enhanced. The school are committed to providing</p>

	<p>opportunities to all pupils currently enrolled to develop their life skills through the day curriculum.</p> <p>The Friday curriculum is exclusively aimed at enhancing the holistic development of each pupil, offering opportunities as diverse as travelling into Croydon on public transport to buy cooking ingredients, to landscaping, outdoor adventure activities, college, and extended work experience. This day provision is accessed by 100% of the students.</p>
<p>Sunnydown is an academically able SEND school, with a focus on children doing as many exams as they are able. Boarding is part and parcel of that, providing boys with fundamental opportunities to access skills. To take opportunities they must access social skills and if you take away boarding what will you put in place instead?</p>	<p>The focus for the school has always been to make sure that the basics are right: resilience and independence. Through applying the philosophical principles of Maslow's Hierarchy to all pupils and in all decisions, Sunnydown achieves a phenomenal amount and the majority of the pupils on roll do not access the boarding provision.</p> <p>The majority of Special Schools in Surrey are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted and the majority don't have boarding but still provide a well-rounded curriculum that produces better long-term outcomes for pupils. Sunnydown School will continue to work closely with colleagues in other schools to learn how they maximise opportunities for socialisation and independence.</p>
<p>Will any after-school provision be available if boarding is removed? In order to help the social aspect for the boys? There is very little (if any) provision for similar in the area, as it is</p>	<p>After school clubs are being considered by the school.</p> <p>Some of the day pupils already access the extended day curriculum. However, there is a charge for this to families and transport has to be arranged by families as opposed to being provided by SCC in line with home to school travel arrangements.</p> <p>SCC and the wider SEND Partnership are enhancing their Local Offer website and through the county wide All Age Autism Strategy and work with voluntary and charitable organisations, may be in a position to sign-post families to more local social opportunities for the boys.</p> <p>Families who may be interested in exploring eligibility for respite care or 'short breaks' can find more details here: CS3675-Short-Breaks-Leaflet-February-2018.pdf (surreycc.gov.uk)</p>
<p>Many children have long journeys to school and if you remove boarding, they will have to do that more often. Financially SCC will be paying for more taxis so it will cost Surrey more. I can't see the logic in removing the provision.</p>	<p>The cost of a night in the boarding provision is £136 per night per pupil.</p> <p>The school currently has pupils utilising home to school transport which may be able to accommodate pupils who are currently attending the boarding provision, limiting the potential cost increases to the transport budget.</p>

	<p>There are currently 17 routes transporting 65 Sunnydown School pupils. The total weekly cost of which is £10,629.50, an estimated annual cost of £403,921 for the school year.</p> <p>In comparison, the boarding provision has a total weekly cost of £15,640 and an annual cost of £594,320.</p>
<p>This proposal could be prejudicial against West Surrey residents who now face long commutes every day. There is no comparable provision elsewhere in the county.</p>	<p>Three new ASD special schools are being built in Surrey, two of which will provide all-through education for pupils with higher functioning autism and social communication & interaction needs, like the pupils at Sunnydown School. One of these new special schools will be located in the west of the county and is expected to open in 2023. The second DfE funded school will be located in Dorking and will open in 2023.</p>
<p>There is already a traffic trouble with the three schools on the Whyteleafe Road campus with the concomitant problem with pollution. Closing the residential provision will increase daily vehicle movements and make worse the danger of vehicle exhaust to all people utilizing the site. Surrey County Council's duty of care should be remembered.</p>	<p>The three Headteachers responsible for schools who directly utilise the roundabout are in close communication. A collaborative Governing body/SLT working party have been working on the issue of traffic flow for several years, including consulting with SCC representatives.</p> <p>Closing the residential facility itself will not increase traffic as the taxis that already pick up and drop off pupils will remain the same. On days when some pupils are boarding, the same number of taxis still arrive as there are other who do not board but are on that particular taxi route.</p> <p>Sunnydown currently contributes 20 taxis per day to the traffic issues impacting all three schools.</p> <p>If the decision is made to close boarding is made, SCC and the school are proposing a subsequent consultation to increase student numbers at Sunnydown, officially from 80 to 100. However, again this will have negligible impact on the traffic since Sunnydown already have 88 students transported to school. Another 12 students may increase the number of vehicles by between 3 and 5 cars.</p>
<p>If the boarding provision is removed, and there is an after-school support programme put into place, will Surrey County Council work with taxi firms with pickup/drop off, so they can get the most out of it?</p>	<p>SCC provides SEND transport for all pupils who are eligible between home and school for regular school hours.</p> <p>Families will need to make separate travel and collection arrangements for pupils who attend after school clubs. This could take the form of shared transport, opportunities to develop independent travel training, walking buddies etc.</p>