

Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy

Consultation on DSP (Designated Specialist Provision)

Context

Pressures for special school places continues to rise across the country. Within Leicester City, the number of pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) continues to rise steadily, particularly for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and social emotional and mental health needs. On current projections, the need for children with an EHCP across the city is expected to grow to 3000 by 2023, 1307 of these needing a special school place.

Special Schools in Leicester are at maximum capacity and there is currently a shortage of specialist places. The average cost of placing children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in an out of city placement is £45k per place per year. This is in contrast to the current average £24.6k per place which can be provided in a local school. Therefore, investment to expand the schools and increase special provision will not only have a positive effect on the lives of children within the city, and the distance they travel to school, but will also positively reduce placement costs.

Response to meet SEND demand

Pupils with SEND have a broad range of needs that are not always aligned with a particular type of school structure. Therefore, the Leicester City Local Authority (LA) needs to ensure there is a spectrum of provision across the City that effectively meets a diverse range of SEND needs. The LA has undertaken in depth analysis to look at the increasing profile of need across the city and has identified that one of the solutions is to expand the level of Designated Specialist Provision (DSP).

Designated Special Provision (DSP)

DSP is a model for offering a co-located specialist facility in a mainstream school which allows pupils with SEND who have needs which would normally be beyond the capacity of the mainstream environment to have those needs met whilst still being able to access a mainstream curriculum.

The intention of a DSP is that pupils will still access a significant amount of mainstream lessons but will also have the support of the DSP for certain aspects of their learning and for other needs. Many children with special needs can be successfully included into a mainstream school. Maintaining a place in a mainstream setting gives access to a broader curriculum for pupils with SEND and attainment is typically higher for pupils where this is an option. In addition, educating pupils with SEND alongside their peers in mainstream has significant benefits both for the pupils with SEND, who have access to the wider social life of the school, but also for the wider school community, as it creates a more diverse and inclusive culture.

Special Schools provide a significant degree of specialism and intensity of provision to pupils with very high SEND. DSPs provide an environment for pupils with SEND but for whom the combination of specialist support and access to the mainstream school provision is appropriate.

Local Authority approach

The LA approached several schools across the city to propose the creation of a range of DSPs, each one specialising in a particular aspect of SEND. These units will allow children to still be in a mainstream setting and not travel considerable distances to school. Included in the LA approach was The Mead Educational Trust and some of its schools.

Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy DSP

The DSP will cater for up to 10 pupils from Key Stage 2. All of these pupils will have an Education, Health and Care Plan detailing a primary need of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

The DSP will be a specially adapted building environment with space for learning and intervention groups.

The DSP will be run by specialist teaching staff and supported by an experienced SEMH school assistant principal trained in emotional literacy and specialist intervention support. In addition, there is will be a dedicated mental health practitioner. This support will concentrate on specific pupil needs and wider school staff training. If pupils have other needs then the relevant external agency will support.

The aims and purpose of the Willowbrook Mead SEMH DSP are to:

- Provide pupils with specialist teaching targeted at those with SEMH.
- Provide a structured, supportive environment where pupils can feel secure, develop confidence and achieve their full potential.
- Provide a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum using a wide range of teaching methods and styles to meet the needs of individual pupils.
- Provide opportunities for specific interventions, for example to develop independence and social skills.
- Enable pupils to be included in mainstream lessons and extra-curricular activities whenever this is appropriate.
- Work in close partnership with parents/carers, outside agencies and the pupils.

Benefits to the school

Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy has a higher than national average number of children with EHCPs and a diagnosis of SEMH. By introducing this DSP provision we are bringing further SEMH expertise into the school. This expertise will benefit all pupils at Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy due to the increased ability to understand and meet need better for some key pupils, as well as sharing good practice across the school.

FAQs

Why was Willowbrook chosen for this DSP?

The school already has strong SEMH provision and the DSP will allow us to build on this.

How do the DSP admissions work? These go through the City Council Pupil Allocation Panel so are open to pupils from all over the City (and not just from the school where the DSP is located and not just from The Mead Educational Trust).

How is the DSP funded? The LA provides the funds for the development of the unit and for the pupil places. So no funding is diverted from the school's budget.

Will staff be diverted from the main school to work in the DSP? No. Additional staff are recruited for the DSP.

Who will have oversight of the DSP? The Principal of Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy will have day to day oversight of the DSP. Within The Mead Educational Trust, the Director for Inclusion and

SEND and the Executive Principal for SEND will have oversight of the DSP. Both have considerable SEND experience in Special Schools and DSPs respectively. The LA will also have oversight of the unit.

Where will the DSP be? It will be on the Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy site. It will not impact on current playground space.