

**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SUNDERLAND**

**NOTIFICATION OF STATUTORY PROPOSALS FOR THE LINK SCHOOL**

**Local Authority Proposals**

Sunderland City Council's 'The Link School/ Pupil Referral Unit provision proposals' entail three related statutory proposals as set out below.

**1. ENLARGEMENT/ INCREASE IN CAPACITY**

Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, that it is the intention of Sunderland City Council, Plater Way, Sunderland SR1 3AA to make a prescribed alteration to

- **The Link School, Swindon Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR3 4EE**

by increasing the number of available places from 172 places to 220 places with effect from 1 January 2023.

**2. ESTABLISH SATELLITE SITES**

Related to the first proposal, notice is given in accordance with Section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, that Sunderland City Council, Plater Way, Sunderland SR1 3AA intends to make a prescribed alteration by establishing satellite sites for

- **The Link School, Swindon Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR3 4EE**

with effect from 1 January 2023. Sites will be in the Coalfields, Washington and Central Sunderland.

**3. ESTABLISH A RESOURCED SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH UNIT**

Related to the first and second proposals, notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, that it is the intention of Sunderland City Council, Plater Way, Sunderland SR1 3AA to make a prescribed alteration to

- **The Link School, Swindon Road, Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, SR3 4EE**

by establishing an 8-place resourced SEN Unit for the 2023/24 academic year. This will be based at the proposed Coalfields satellite provision.

The Link School is a Pupil Referral Unit/ Alternative Provision school maintained by Sunderland City Council.

**Enlargement / Increase in Capacity**

The proposal will result in an increase from 172 places to 220 places at the Link School. As the proposal expands the capacity of the provision by more than 30 places and 25% of the current capacity this element of the proposal is subject to completion of the relevant statutory process.

**Expansion onto an Additional Site (Or Satellite Site)**

The proposal to provide satellite provision sites for the Link School ensures that a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)/ Alternative Provision (AP) can be accessed within localities. This will reduce the need for young pupils, particularly those aged between 5 and 11 years of age, to travel to the city centre to access appropriate provision for their needs. Assessment centre models within the

satellites will increase the potential for a pupil's successful re-integration back to their substantive mainstream setting or, alternatively, lead to a more appropriate special school or provision placement.

The proposal will result in the expansion of the existing provision from the current two sites (Pallion and Springwell) to five sites (to include a satellite for primary aged pupils at Hudson Road Primary School (Villiers Street South, Sunderland SR1 2AH) and the former Hetton le Hole Nursery School (Victoria Street, Hetton-le-Hole, Houghton le Spring, Tyne and Wear, DH5 9DG) and a secondary aged satellite at Oxclose Community Academy (Dilston Close Oxclose Village, Washington NE38 0LN)).

Operationally the provision will be managed under the Link School's existing leadership systems including the existing Management Committee and Senior Leadership. Pupils will have designated host sites but will, as required, have access to resources from any of the Link School's five delivery sites. Staffing will also be shared across the five sites. It is therefore an expansion of existing provision as opposed to the development of a new provision.

### **Establishment of a Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision**

The proposal seeks to establish an 8 place Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) SEN resourced provision. This would be a provision that is reserved for pupils with Special Educational Needs and falls outside the scope of the Link School's current offer.

The proposal to establish a SEMH provision in the Coalfields will ensure that provision is located and distributed across the city, with the current SEMH provision all based in the city centre. It will also provide much needed additional capacity in Sunderland resulting in fewer out of area or independent school placements.

### **Implementation.**

Subject to the approval of the above proposals

- Capacity of the Link School will be increased from 1st January 2023
- The satellite units in Washington and Central Sunderland will be operational from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2023
- The opening date of the satellite unit in the Coalfields is subject to the completion of required capital works. It is projected that the unit will be operational from Easter 2023
- The opening date of the Social, Emotional and Mental Health provision (co-based with the Coalfields Satellite Provision) is subject to the completion of required capital works. It is projected that the unit will be operational from Easter 2023

### **Reason for Proposals**

Demand for places at the Link School exceeds supply. This is resulting in pupils either being accommodated in mainstream school places that are not able to fully meet their wider needs, or, alternatively, being transported to out of authority provision.

Demand for places at the Link School come from across the city but supply of places is predominantly based in the city centre. This requires travel from pupils in localities. This can

result in some pupils travelling for between 1 and 2 hours each day to access the PRU/ AP provision.

The proposals will result in the following benefits:

#### **Increased capacity within the local alternative provision sector**

- The proposals would result in a 48-place increase in local AP capacity across the three areas (Coalfields, Washington, and East Sunderland). The capacity in Washington and East Sunderland would support the permanent establishment of the Assessment Hub model in the city while the capacity allocated in the Coalfields would support the delivery of localised Key Stage 1 and 2 provision in that area.

#### **Increased appropriateness of placements within the local alternative provision model and SEND**

- The proposals would formalise current pilot schemes in Washington and East Sunderland that focus on assessment and subsequent appropriate placement within commissioned places. The permanent delivery of that model ensures that pupils with additional behavioural requirements are placed in provision that best meets their needs and the receiving provision has a greater level of understanding and assessment information on how best to accommodate those pupils.
- The establishment of a Coalfields KS1/ KS2 satellite AP setting would ensure the youngest pupils that access commissioned places at the PRU would be able to do so in a location more appropriate to their needs. Increased appropriateness in this context includes a provision setting that reduces the requirement for excessive daily transport, that increases the option for attendance at both an AP setting and a substantive school placement and that ensures the cohort is taught with an age-appropriate peer group.
- However, while the Coalfields site will provide a pupil's predominant AP placement there will be pupil movement between the satellite sites and the PRU's main delivery site in Springwell. This will enable all pupils attending the provision to access specialist materials and other educational resources at those sites as required by their established learning plans.

#### **Reduced central administrative costs**

- The development of a Coalfields KS1/ KS2 satellite and Behavioural Unit for pupils in receipt of an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) will enable pupils to access provision within their locality. It is anticipated that most of the pupils attending the provisions will be resident in the Coalfields or that travel to the Coalfields satellite will be less than the travel time to the main KS1/KS2 delivery site in Sunderland City Centre. This will result in efficiencies to the Home to School transport budget.
- The establishment of an 8 place SEMH provision would, as above, reduce home to school transport requirements for those pupils with an EHCP and for whom the provision would be suitable. Currently primary aged pupils accessing SEMH provision do so at North View Academy in West Sunderland.
- When local places are at capacity, as they have been since 2020/21, out of area provision or independent places are sought as an alternative. The creation of additional, local SEMH places, as well as additional AP places, would result in savings to the local High Needs Funding Block when compared to independent and out of area provision.
- It is also considered that, in addition to increasing the appropriateness of provision to children in localities, the refurbishment of the Hetton site would result in a lower capital

expenditure than, for example, the extension of the existing Springwell site. The proposal would therefore result in both long-term revenue savings and short-term capital savings.

### **Effect on other Schools, Academies and Educational Institutions in the Area**

The proposal is anticipated to have positive implications for other schools, academies and educational institutions in the area.

- Pupils on roll at mainstream schools who take up placements within the PRU provision will have access to resources and provision that is consistent with their substantive mainstream placements while out of school.
- Greater resource for PRU attendees will lead to a higher quality and more varied educational delivery which may facilitate more efficient transition for pupils who are to be re-integrated into their substantive mainstream school places post placement.
- Re-integration of Coalfields based younger children back into their mainstream school places will be assisted. The closer proximity between the PRU and local primary schools will allow phased re-introduction where children will have the opportunity to attend their substantive mainstream place as well as access PRU provision.
- The permanent establishment of the Assessment Satellite Hubs in Washington and Central Sunderland will continue the work of the pilots. Feedback from the pilot schemes identifies that no pupil who attended a hub place was subsequently subject to a permanent expulsion on their return to a substantive mainstream place.
- Increased local SEMH capacity will ensure that pupils are placed appropriately and that children, for whom it has been identified that a mainstream place is not appropriate, will not be retained in that setting due to lack of capacity in the SEN sector. This will ensure schools and academies can allocate resources more effectively.

### **Project Costs**

While not part of this statutory process, the proposal to amalgamate the City's PRU provision is linked to the intention to refurbish the former Hetton le Hole Nursery School site as the Coalfields Satellite and SEMH Unit.

The £0.5m refurbishment of the former Springwell Dene School will include rehabilitation of all classrooms and teaching support areas, rehabilitation and development of external teaching and social areas and the delivery of new ICT infrastructure and associated equipment.

## Pupil Numbers and Admissions

Given the nature of PRU provision the number of pupils on roll is subject to fluctuation across the academic year. The Link School's Admission data for the full 2021-22 academic year is included below

Group		Total Numbers KS1-4			
		During Year		Current	
		No	%	No	%
All	On Roll	259	100%	182	100%
Gender	Boys	164	63%	110	60%
	Girls	95	37%	72	40%
Pupil Premium	No	86	33%	62	34%
	Yes	173	67%	120	66%
Children Cared For	No	244	94%	172	95%
	Yes	15	6%	10	5%
SEN Status	Pupil with EHCP	16	6%	5	3%
	Pupil with SEND Support	190	73%	130	71%
	No Additional Support	53	21%	47	26%

Enrolment data for the Hub Pilots (2021/22) is included in the table below

Group		HUBPRIM				HUBSEC			
		During Year		Current		During Year		Current	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
All	On Roll	16	100%	5	100%	28	100%	11	100%
Gender	Boys	14	88%	5	100%	18	64%	4	36%
	Girls	2	13%	0	0%	10	36%	7	64%
Pupil Premium	No	7	44%	3	60%	8	29%	5	45%
	Yes	9	56%	2	40%	20	71%	6	55%
LAC	No	16	100%	5	100%	27	96%	11	100%
	Yes	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%	0	0%
SEN Status	EHCP	0	0%	0	0%	1	4%	0	0%
	SEND Support	15	94%	5	100%	24	86%	10	91%
	No SEND	1	6%	0	0%	3	11%	1	9%

### Displaced Pupils

The proposal will not result in displaced pupils. It will ensure pupils who would ordinarily access a place at the provision are more likely to receive one (because of the increased capacity) or ensure that pupils already accessing the provision but who are required to travel from localities to do so can be accommodated at a setting that is more appropriately located.

Pupils accessing SEMH provision will be those who have been identified by an Education, Health and Care Plan Placement Panel as requiring that provision. Mainstream school placements will have been considered unsuitable to meet the needs of pupils. On that basis there is no displacement associated with the delivery of a SEN unit at the Link School.

### **Impact on the Community**

The move to increase the capacity of and establish satellite sites for the Link School will not impact on the community. The PRU is a citywide resource. Therefore, amalgamating and moving part of the provision will not result in mainstream places being removed from a community.

The three satellite sites are to be based at established education settings or buildings that until recently have been used exclusively for educational use. They have already operated within the local community settings in which they are located.

Wider positive impacts will come from the development of locality provision. Specifically, the ability for young people from the Coalfields to access a site (either for an Alternative Provision or SEMH placement) that enables them to continue to attend a school place near their home without excessive travel.

### **Balance of Denominational Provision**

There would be no impact on the balance of denominational provision as the City's PRU provision does not have a religious character.

### **Rural Primary Schools**

Sunderland's PRU provision does not fall within the categorisation of a rural primary as set out in Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. Furthermore, the school is not listed on the DfE's List of Designated Rural Primary Schools 2018.

### **Maintained Nursery Schools**

Not applicable - There is no nursery implication within this proposal.

### **Sixth Form Provision**

Not applicable - There is no provision for students aged 16 to 19.

### **Special Educational Provision**

The proposal will deliver a SEMH unit within the Coalfields Link School satellite site. This provision will be for primary aged children with the majority who will attend the unit living in the Coalfields area. It responds to the need for additional SEMH places in the city, the ambition to ensure there is appropriate local provision for pupils and utilises the expertise of the Link School in providing for this cohort.

### **Travel**

There would be significant decrease in car use because of these proposals. The delivery of locality sites will enable pupils to access provision nearer to their homes. This will reduce both the period spent travelling to and from provision and the costs associated with that travel.

## Consultation

An informal (pre-publication) consultation upon the proposals took place during the following dates:

- 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022 to 20<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Consultees recommended in the relevant statutory guidance were consulted via a Consultation Document that was made widely available on the Council's website and PRU websites. Consultees included parents, staff, pupils, local schools and academies, early-years providers, the local Councillors and staff representatives (unions).

There were 74 responses to the consultation. 73 supported the Council's proposals and 1 objected to the Council's proposals. The objection was to the proposal to establish a satellite provision in the Coalfields.

## Submission of Objections and Comments on Proposals

A copy of this proposal can be viewed on the Sunderland City Council website at

<https://www.sunderland.gov.uk/article/13038/School-organisation-consultations>

It can also be requested via:

E-mail: [alan.rowan@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:alan.rowan@sunderland.gov.uk)

Telephone: 07917 504203

Post: Retained Education Functions Lead, City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland, SR1 3AA.

Within four weeks of the Publication Date below, any person may object to or make comments on the proposals by sending their written representations:

*By e-mail to :-*

[schoolorganisation@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:schoolorganisation@sunderland.gov.uk)

*Or by post to :-*

*Alan Rowan*

*Retained Education Functions Lead*

*City Hall,*

*Plater Way,*

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*SR1 3AA*

Signed : Patrick Melia,

Chief Executive,

Sunderland City Council.

Publication Date: 28<sup>th</sup> September 2022