

**THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SUNDERLAND**

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

**Local Authority 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, City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland, SR1 3AA to:

- 1. Discontinue the existing satellite site for The Link School in Washington which is at Oxclose Community Academy, Dilston Close, Oxclose Village, Washington, NE30 0LN**

Notice is also hereby given in accordance with Paragraph 20(3), Schedule 3 of The School Organisation (Prescribed Changes to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 that it is the intention of Sunderland City Council, City Hall, Plater Way, Sunderland, SR1 3AA to :

- 2. Revoke decisions to establish satellite sites of The Link School in South Sunderland and Hetton which were made following publication of the proposals on 28 September 2022; and**
- 3. Revoke a decision to establish a resourced Social, Emotional and Mental Health Unit at The Link School which was made following publication of the proposal on 28 September 2022.**

The Link School is a Local Authority Maintained Alternative Provision Provider with sites at Springwell Dene (Swindon Road, Sunderland, SR3 4EE) and Pallion (Waverley Terrace, Pallion, SR4 6TA).

**Reasons**

The decision is required on the following basis:

- The Link School previously leased premises in Washington to deliver a secondary assessment hub as a satellite delivery site. That lease ended in September 2024. The provision previously delivered from Washington will be delivered by The Link School as part of its substantive educational offer from its Springwell Dene site. As a Washington site is no longer available the Council is required to discontinue the satellite site.
- The previous approvals included the refurbishment of the former Hetton Le Hole Nursery building to re-instate the premises as a Link School satellite in the Coalfields. Due to further depreciation of the building condition and reduced operator capacity, it is no longer possible to implement the proposed Link School satellite site in Hetton. This includes the SEMH provision that was to be based at the site. The Council is therefore not able to implement this proposal.
- The Council previously approved the implementation of a primary assessment hub from the Hudson Road Primary School site in South Sunderland. An alternative accommodation strategy has been developed to deliver a primary aged assessment hub from The Link School's substantive site at Springwell

Dene. The implementation of a satellite site at Hudson Road Primary School is therefore no longer required.

- Previous discussions had identified retaining the planned SEMH provision at the Springwell Dene site. Considering The Link School's eviction from its site in Washington there is no longer capacity at Springwell Dene to action this. Therefore, the previous proposal to implement an 8 place SEMH provision can now not be implemented.
- For the reasons above it is considered that implementation of the proposals would be unreasonably difficult and also that circumstances have so altered since approval was given that implementation would be inappropriate.

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

The Council has developed a series of mitigation measures to minimise the impact of the school organisation requirements outlined above. The capacity of the primary and secondary Assessment Hubs will be retained with schools still able to commission this provision from The Link School's Springwell Dene site.

An alternative local SEN provision has been agreed in principle which would result in schools and academies retaining an educational partner in the Coalfields area despite the revocation of the Link School Hetton satellite proposal. It is therefore projected that the proposals outlined in this paper will not negatively impact on other schools, academies and educational settings in the city.

### **Project Costs**

The proposals include a series of mitigation factors to ensure there is a minimal net loss of provision by not implementing the previous decisions. The capital costs associated with the development of alternative delivery options are: \_

(1) Relocation of Primary and Secondary Assessment Hubs to Springwell Dene Site - This will result in approximately 32 additional pupils attending the Springwell Dene Site. Capital cost to support this requirement is estimated at £0.35m.

(2) Development of an alternative Hetton Special Educational Needs offer for primary aged children currently has an estimated Capital requirement of £0.85m. This will be supported using funds previously allocated to the refurbishment of the former Hetton Le Hole Nursery building.

The proposals have no revenue implications over and above those previously identified.

### **Pupil Numbers and Admissions**

The proposals contained within will result in no net loss in existing capacity in the city. Hub capacity will be relocated to The Link School's Springwell Dene site while the Coalfields satellite provision is currently projected to be implemented through the development of an alternative SEN proposal.

### **Displaced Pupils**

As the Coalfields satellite provision had not been implemented there will be no displacement of existing pupils. Pupils displaced from the discontinuance of the Washington Assessment Hub will be accommodated at The Link School's Springwell Dene site. On that basis this proposal will not result in any displacement of pupils currently on a school roll or waiting list for an alternative provision place.

Pupils who were projected to attend the proposed provision at Hudson Road are currently accommodated at The Link School's Springwell Dene site. On that basis not implementing the proposal as previously agreed has not resulted in any displacement of pupils.

### **Impact on the Community**

The relocation of the Primary and Secondary Assessment Hubs will not result in a net impact. The provisions are not locality specific. They provide a service for the wider city's school population and home to school transport is provided as required.

The development of a Hetton Link School satellite was intended to provide the Coalfields with a locality-based provision. Therefore, the decision to not implement this proposal would have resulted in a negative impact for local pupils. In July 2024 Cabinet approved the award of a grant to Hetton Lyons Primary Academy to develop an alternative SEN offer for the Coalfields. It is currently anticipated that offer will provide 16 places for pupils with Autism. Based on citywide waiting lists for primary ASD provision and the distance Coalfield based children are currently required to travel to access a specialist setting the Council considers that the development of an ASD provision (as opposed to an AP provision) will provide the area with a provision that meets a greater level of local need than the original proposal

### **Balance of Denominational Provision**

There will be no impact on the balance of denominational provision as the proposals do not involve any provisions that have a religious character.

## **Special Educational Needs Provision (SEN)**

The 8 place Social, Emotional and Mental Health provision planned for the former Hetton le Hole Nursery site can now not be implemented. However, in partnership with Hetton Lyons Primary Academy, a 16 place ASD provision is to be developed in the Coalfields with further evaluation of further localised SEN delivery models currently underway.

The class bases at Hudson Road Primary Academy that were previously identified to accommodate the Primary Assessment Hub will now support a Social, Emotional and Mental Health Provision for the South Sunderland area. That provision commenced delivery in September 2024

## **Travel**

The implementation of the Primary Assessment Hub and relocation of the discontinued Secondary Assessment Hub satellite will not result in a net increase in general travel. The provisions are citywide provision and are accessed by children from across Sunderland. The central location (Springwell Dene) will be a more accessible location for a proportion of the pupils who will access one or both provisions.

It is acknowledged that the decision not to implement a Link School satellite will result in Coalfields children who may have accessed that provision now travelling to The Link School's Springwell Dene site to access provision. However, given the increase in children with Education, Health and Care Plans who are currently accessing placements at Alternative Provision providers it is likely that several of the children who would have accessed The Link School satellite will instead access the alternative SEN provision being developed in partnership with a local Hetton school.

Equally, there are a number of children from the Coalfields currently travelling to Washington or North Sunderland to access a SEN place at either a Special School or a Special Educational Needs Unit. Those children will now be able to access local ASD places in the Coalfields.

## **Consultation**

The Council has previously consulted on the implementation of the school organisation requirements contained within this proposal.

The Council does not consider there to be any viable alternatives to the mitigation actions contained within this paper. The Council's lease at the Washington site will come to an end in September 2024. In addition, implementation of the decisions to establish satellite sites of The Link School in South Sunderland and Hetton and also a Social, Emotional and Mental Health Unit would now be unreasonably difficult and circumstances have so altered since approval was given that implementation would be inappropriate.

However, there will be further consultation on any additional provisions brought forward to further localise provision in the future.

Balmoral Learning Trust is currently consulting on the proposal to implement an ASD provision at Hetton Lyons Primary Academy.

## Submission of Objections and Comments on the Proposal

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@togetherforchildren.org.uk](mailto:alan.rowan@togetherforchildren.org.uk)

Post: Sufficiency and Capital Lead, Together for Children, 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*

*Sufficiency and Capital Lead*

*Together for Children,*

*City Hall,*

*Plater Way,*

*Sunderland*

*SR1 3AA*

Signed: Patrick Melia,

Chief Executive,

Sunderland City Council.

Publication Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024