



AVANTI SCHOOLS TRUST

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My ref: School Planning
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Date: 5 January 2021

Dear Consultee

Consultation on a proposal to open a 'Specialist Resource Provision' (SRP) at the new Avanti Schools Trust secondary school (the School), Bishop's Stortford, from September 2023.

Hertfordshire County Council and the Board of Trustees of the Avanti Schools Trust (the Trust) are consulting you on a proposal to develop a Specialist Resource Provision at the new Avanti secondary school, an academy school, for up to 20 pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with social communication difficulties, including autism.

Hertfordshire County Council is developing SRPs at a range of mainstream schools across the County. The aim is to have four SRPs at secondary schools and a further eight at primary schools, spread equitably across the County, delivered in phases, starting with the secondary sector. Secondary SRPs are also being proposed at the following schools:

- The Priory School in Hitchin;
- Longdean School in Hemel Hempstead; and
- Bushey Meads School in Bushey.

Why is this being proposed?

There are an increasing number of pupils with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) who have a broader and more complex level of need, including autism and social communication difficulties, that cannot be met in the existing

provision. This means that more children are being placed in independent specialist provision or, unnecessarily, in special schools. The pupils with this broader and more complex need have difficulties with communication, social relationships and managing a busy school environment. This often leads to anxiety and disengagement, or inappropriate coping strategies, including 'shutting down'. These pupils need access to a mainstream curriculum and academic challenge, balanced with a safe space to be in, where work can be done to support self-regulation, build resilience and protect emotional wellbeing.

This has led to the proposal to develop a pattern of SRPs across the County, for pupils with social communication difficulties, including autism.

What will the SRPs do?

The vision is that, through short and appropriate intervention, the self-esteem of these pupils can be developed. They would be kept well emotionally and supported to reach their academic potential.

It is proposed that each secondary SRP will provide up to 20 places. The pupils will be on the roll of the school and will form part of any statutory returns required from maintained schools, including key stage results. The provision will form part of any Ofsted inspection.

The SRP will be a centre of excellence for pupils with social communication difficulties, including autism. The SRP will:

- be an important part of Hertfordshire County Council's graduated approach to meeting needs locally;
- meet the needs of pupils within the provision, providing personalised support to enable them to make good progress in all areas of their development;
- build capacity across the School, ensuring that all staff have the skills and expertise to meet the needs of the pupils when they are accessing the wider school curriculum;
- work with other schools across the Welwyn and Hatfield, East Hertfordshire and Broxbourne area to support meeting these types of needs and improving outcomes for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND).

Why do the Board of Trustees of the Avanti Schools Trust have an interest in developing an SRP at the new secondary school in Bishop's Stortford?

All the schools in the Avanti Schools Trust are underpinned by an approach to education that seeks to be both inclusive and holistic. In essence, they are guided by a collective view that we are unique beings with incredible potential.

The Trust are confident that the key principles of Hertfordshire County Council's SRP strategy align with its philosophy and principles that inform its mission to help each person become a well-rounded human being. The Trust strongly believe that

Hertfordshire's 6 outcome bees¹ are closely aligned, and indeed beautifully complement, Avanti's own approach to ensuring that the hierarchy of needs are both addressed and met.

What does this mean for pupils?

The SRP will have clear admission and exit guidance. To be admitted to the SRP, a child must have an EHCP and will have social communication difficulties, including autism. They will have needs greater than, or additional to, the needs that can normally be met through full time attendance at a mainstream school. The School will be named in the child's EHCP. Admission to the SRP will be distinct from the School's general admissions process.

From time to time pupils based in the SRP would join sessions in the main school with their age group peers. Typically, these pupils would be supported by specialist staff from the SRP.

Other pupils at the school who are not in the SRP, but who have social communication difficulties, including autism, would benefit from main school staff working alongside specialist colleagues. However, access to SRP staff and resources would only be through admission to the SRP.

What would be the impact on staff?

The Headteacher will keep a strategic overview of the SRP, including staff recruitment, training and retention. It is expected that the Headteacher or other senior leader will be the line manager for the SRP Leader.

The County Council have developed a full staff training and development programme to ensure consistency of offer across the four secondary schools who are developing SRP provision.

Have your say

You have until 1 February 2021 to let us know your views. The easiest way you can do this is by completing the online response form on our website:

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/consultations.

If you do not have access to the internet you can visit your local library where free access is available to all Hertfordshire residents². Staff at libraries can print off and supply consultation documents if requested to.

Should you wish to request a hard copy of the response form or need help understanding this information you can email:

¹ <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/services/childrens-social-care/child-protection/hertfordshire-safeguarding-children-partnership/professionals-and-volunteers/hertfordshires-6-outcome-bees.aspx>

² Please note that during current Covid-19 conditions, access to libraries may not be available. Best endeavours will be used to publicise the proposal as widely as possible.

education.planning@hertfordshire.gov.uk or alternatively please call us on 0300 123 4043. An interpreting service is available for those who need it.

Your comments must be received by 1 February 2021. We will not be able to acknowledge or respond individually to your comments, but they will be taken into account as explained below.

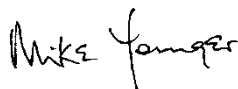
How the decision will be taken

This is a consultation and no decision has been made yet. All comments received to this consultation will be made available to the Board of Trustees of the Avanti Schools Trust and elected members of Hertfordshire County Council. All responses may be made available in public reports, although personal details will be removed to respect individual privacy.


The following timetable outlines the decision-making process. Please note that meetings marked with * are meetings in public. Although it will not be possible to inform everyone individually of the decisions made, you will be able to access this information throughout the process at: www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/committees.

Public consultation	5 January – 1 February 2021
Children, Young People & Families Cabinet Panel*	15 March 2021
Cabinet* To consider the outcome of public consultation and decide whether to support the proposal	22 March 2021
Avanti Schools Trust, as a multi-academy trust, will submit a business case to the Regional Schools Commissioners (RSC)	April 2021
RSC decision	anticipated by end of July 2021

Yours faithfully



Mike Younger
Chair of Avanti Schools Trust



Jenny Coles
Director of Children's Services
Hertfordshire County Council