



Avanti Schools Trust
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8th June

Dear Consultee,

Consultation on the proposal to open a Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) at Avanti Brook Primary School, Bishop's Stortford from September 2024.

The Board of Trustees is consulting you on the proposal to open a Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) at Avanti Brook Primary School, Newland Avenue, Bishop's Stortford, CM23, Hertfordshire, from September 2024. The SRP will provide up to 12 places for pupils with social communication difficulties, including autism, in addition to children with severe speech disorders and developmental language disorder (DLD).

Why is this being proposed?

Children and young people with developmental language disorder and severe speech motor disorders are currently provided for by a pattern of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) bases attached to mainstream schools. These children and young people continue to need access to the mainstream curriculum, delivered in a linguistically modified and visually supported environment.

Officers have identified an increasing number of pupils with SLCN who have a broader and more complex level of need, including autism and social communication difficulties. Often these young people access education in special schools, but the creation of SRPs in mainstream schools will build on what is currently offered in SLCN bases, allowing many of these pupils to access a mainstream curriculum, balanced with a safe space to be in, where work can be done to support self-regulation and emotional wellbeing.

This has led to Hertfordshire County Council developing a proposed pattern of SRPs for the children and young people with social communication difficulties in addition to those with speech and language disorders, as part of the continuation of provision for children and young people with:

- developmental language disorder and/or a severe speech motor disorder (developmental verbal dyspraxia);
- social communication and social interaction difficulty, who may acquire a diagnosis of autism.

Avanti values on academic achievement and personal development, we believe that pupils should achieve their full potential, learning alongside their peers within a nurturing environment. The proposed SRP will allow some of the area's most vulnerable learners receive a rich curriculum which reflects their individual needs and aspirations. There will be a clear focus on teaching and learning within the school that runs in conjunction with a commitment to developing well-rounded, industrious young people who are happy and responsible for shaping their own purposeful futures. The proposal for Avanti Brook Primary School to open an SRP is fully supported by Hertfordshire County Council.

Access to the provision will be needs-led, with a robust multi-disciplinary team overseeing admissions, to ensure early intervention. Access for children and young people with social communication difficulties will not be reliant on a medical diagnosis of autism. However, children with developmental language disorder and severe speech motor disorders will be identified by a speech and language therapy lead clinician, ahead of being recommended to the admissions panel.

The pupils with 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.

Full details of the county council's strategy and the potential impact on schools in the East Herts, Broxbourne, Welwyn and Hatfield area and across the rest of the county are outlined in Hertfordshire County Council's Supplementary Information document.

What will the SRP do?

The vision is that, through short and appropriate intervention, the confidence of these pupils can be developed. They will be supported emotionally as well as academically, to help reach their academic potential.

It is proposed that each primary SRP will offer 12 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 intention is that the SRP will be a centre of excellence, meeting the needs of pupils with social communication difficulties, including autism, in addition to children with severe speech disorders and developmental language disorder.

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; and
- work with other schools across the East Herts, Broxbourne, Welwyn and Hatfield area, to support the needs of pupils with social communication difficulties, including autism, in addition to children with severe speech disorders and developmental language disorder.

Why the Board of Trustees have an interest in developing an SRP at Avanti Brook Primary School

We believe that the entitlement to an inclusive, broad, balanced, relevant, and differentiated curriculum is a right for all and should not be constrained by age, gender, creed, race, physical disability, special education need or vulnerability. This entitlement should be delivered by trained personnel, committed to maximum inclusion, who are able to provide a happy, sensitive, secure, and developmental environment, in which all individuals are encouraged and enabled to undertake self-development, self-advocacy, respect for self, respect for others and respect for the environment. 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 is 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 bees' 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 Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan and will have social communication difficulties, including autism, or will have severe speech disorders and developmental language disorder. Pupils 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 EHC plan. Admission to the SRP will be distinct from the school's general admissions process.

Pupils will have access to mainstream lessons in line with their needs. They may initially need support from specialist staff, but as they progress, they will be able to attend lessons independently.

Other pupils at the school who are not in the SRP, but who have social communication difficulties, in addition to children with severe speech disorders and developmental language disorder, would benefit from mainstream 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 recruitment, training and retention of the SRP staff. It is expected that the Headteacher or other senior leader will be the line manager for the leader of the SRP.

The county council has developed a continuing professional development programme for staff to ensure consistency of offer across the SRPs.

The school will receive additional revenue funding to fund a flexible staffing model that supports pupils, both in the SRP base and in mainstream classes as appropriate.

Have your say

All comments must be received by 4 July 2022. The easiest way to respond to the consultation is by completing the response form on the county council's website at:

www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/consultations.

Should you wish to request a hard copy of the response form or need help understanding this information you can email: info@avanti.org.uk or alternatively please call 020 8731 1454.

Your comments must be received by 4 July 2022. The Avanti Schools Trust 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. All responses may be made available in public reports, although personal details will be removed to respect individual privacy.

Avanti Brook Primary School is an academy and therefore, the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) will be the final decision maker.

The following timetable outlines the decision-making process. 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.avanti.org.uk/consultations

Public consultation	8 June – 4 July 2022
Board of Trustees to consider the consultation responses and decide on whether to progress to the next stage of the process	Summer 2022
School to submit business case to the RSC (subject to approval)	Autumn 2022
RSC decision	Spring 2023
Implementation (subject to approval)	September 2023

Yours faithfully

Mike Ion

**Education Director
Avanti Schools Trust**