



AVANTI SCHOOLS TRUST

Avanti Schools Trust
Wemborough Road
HA7 2EQ
info@avanti.org.uk

8th June

Dear Consultee,

Consultation on the proposal to open a Specialist Resource Provision at Avanti Grange Secondary School, Bishop's Stortford, from September 2023.

In January 2021, the Board of Trustees consulted on the proposal to open a Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) at Avanti Grange Secondary School, from September 2023. Due to the length of time that has elapsed since the consultation, the Board of Trustees are now consulting you again on the proposal to ensure that your views have not changed or you do not have additional comment to make since. The SRP will provide up to 20 places for students with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and 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 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 students 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 students 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 proposing to develop a pattern of SRPs in mainstream schools 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.

Access to the provision will be needs-led, with a robust multi-disciplinary team overseeing admissions, to ensure early intervention. Access for students with social communication difficulties will not be reliant on a medical diagnosis of autism. However, students 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 students 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 students 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 students with social communication difficulties, including autism, in addition to children with severe speech disorders and developmental language disorder.

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 Grange Secondary School to open an SRP is fully supported by Hertfordshire County Council.

Hertfordshire County Council is developing a pattern of SRPs and is proposing to have SRPs in four secondary schools and nine primary schools, spread equitably across the county. The remain three secondary SRPs will be:

School	Town	Date
Bushey Meads School	Bushey	Approved to open from September 2022
The Priory School	Hitchin	Approved to open from September 2022
Longdean School	Hemel Hempstead	Proposed to open from September 2023

What will the SRP do?

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

It is proposed that the SRP will provide up to 20 places. The students will be on the roll of Avanti Grange Secondary 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 students 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 students 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 students 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 the Board of Trustees of Avanti Schools Trusts have an interest in developing an SRP at Avanti Grange Secondary 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 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 bees^[1]

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

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

All comments must be sent to Avanti Schools Trust by **4 July 2022**, either via;
Email info@avanti.org.uk

Or

Post:
Avanti Schools Trust
Wemborough Road
Stanmore
HA7 2EQ

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.

How the decision will be taken

This is a consultation and no decision has been made yet. As Avanti Grange Secondary School is an academy, 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
Avanti Schools Trust to submit a business case to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC)	Summer 2022
RSC decision	Anticipated by January 2023

Yours faithfully,

Mike Ion

**Education Director
Avanti Schools Trust**