

**Meeting date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021  
**Report to:** Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Children,  
Education & Skills



**Subject/report title:** Proposals to create additional SEND places at Reynolds Cross Special School and Mill Lodge Primary School

**Report from:** Director of Children's Services and Skills

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**Wards affected:**

All Wards

**Public/private report:** Public

**Exempt by virtue of paragraph:** N/A

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**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To update Cabinet Member on the outcome of the statutory consultation process to expand places at Reynolds Cross Special School and to create an additionally resourced provision for pupils with Autism at Mill Lodge Primary School.

**2. Decision(s) recommended**

- 2.1 Approve the proposal to expand Reynolds Cross Special School onto the site of Coronation Youth Centre from 1 September 2021, subject to planning permission being approved by 30 May 2021.
- 2.2 Approve the proposal to create an additionally resourced provision for pupils with Autism at Mill Lodge Primary School from 1 September 2021, without modification.

**3. Matters for Consideration**

- 3.1 On 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020, Cabinet Member considered the outcome of consultation with schools and the wider community on proposals to expand Reynolds Cross Special School and create an additionally resourced provision at Mill Lodge Primary School.
- 3.2 The statutory process included the publication of a statutory notice and proposal and a further 4 week period of consultation for each proposal, running until 1 February 2021.
- 3.3 During this period work has been on going with the Headteacher and Governing Body

of both schools.

- 3.4 Two responses have been received to the consultation process, both supporting the proposal at Mill Lodge Primary School, these are attached at Appendix A.

### **Reynalds Cross Special School**

- 3.5 The expansion at Reynalds Cross School will make use of the Coronation Youth Centre site, in Shirley to create 20 additional places over a 2 year period. This proposal will see the School operate a 14-19 curriculum at this site, from where they already operate their early years provision. The further expansion of provision on to the youth centre site, will create a special school hub run by Reynalds Cross School.
- 3.6 In response to the initial round of consultation, three key issues were raised around the Reynalds Cross proposal. They included:-
- Health Support for pupils based on the youth centre site.
  - That the accommodation is remodelled to be fit for purpose for this cohort of pupils,
  - That school transport implications be considered.
- 3.7 During the statutory consultation period discussions have been held with health colleagues to outline the health support required to facilitate this proposal. This work is progressing and will include further discussions between the health provider and the school. The design of the building and its link with the School's early years provision will provide an appropriate space for Health professionals.
- 3.8 Work on the remodelling of the Youth Centre building has continued with the Head and Governing Body and the final design is due for sign off by the School. The provision of school transport to the site has been resolved. The majority of SEND pupils qualify for support with school transport due to their need rather than the location of the provision or distance from home. No pupils will be disadvantaged, those who qualify for transport assistance to one site will qualify for both sites. Therefore there is no change to the level of support offered. As the provision will cater for the 14-19 cohort the school have the opportunity of travel training for students, where this is considered appropriate, supported by the Council's Travel Training Team.
- 3.9 The Headteacher and the Governing Body approved the proposal on 8 February 2021.

### **Mill Lodge**

- 3.10 The proposals at Mill Lodge Primary School will create an additionally resourced provision for up to 8 primary pupils with Autism, in a remodelled building on the school site.
- 3.11 Work has continued with the School and the Solihull Inclusion Support Service (SISS) to ensure that the remodelled building is fit for purpose.

3.12 Following clarification on a number of areas around funding for the new additionally resourced provision the Headteacher and Governing Body of the School are supportive of the proposal and happy to move to implementation.

#### **4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?**

4.1 When considering a statutory proposal the Cabinet Member can decide to:

- Approve the proposal without modification
- Approve the proposal with modification, subject to consultation with the governing body (e.g., the implementation date)
- Approve the proposal subject to certain conditions being met (e.g., planning permission)
- Reject the proposal.

#### **5. Reasons for recommending preferred option**

5.1 Development of in-borough specialist provision is a key strand within the Children's Services wider strategy for managing the increase in demand for specialist provision within the high needs grant paid to the Council. These proposals will provide high quality flexible provision that meet our local needs. Without the creation of additional provision, the council will continue to rely on high cost independent provision located outside of Solihull, putting further strain on both the high needs and transport budgets. On average two pupils can be educated in borough for every child placed outside of Solihull in independent provision.

5.2 The initial consultation process demonstrated wide support for both the expansion of Reynolds Cross School and the development of an additionally resourced provision at Mill Lodge Primary School. The latest round of statutory consultation has not raised any objections to either of the proposals and no modifications are being proposed.

5.3 The expanded Reynolds Cross School will be located in the Coronation Youth Centre building in Shirley. The building is currently unused but by remodelling the building for school there will be the potential to support a wider youth offer. The guidance from the DfE around statutory proposals state that the Decision Maker must be satisfied that the proposals enhance the quality and diversity of schools, promote equal opportunities, support community cohesion and not unnecessarily extend journey times or increase transport costs.

5.4 Officers are satisfied that these proposals are in accordance with the decision maker's guidance. Creating more specialist places, in 'good schools' in Solihull, reduces the numbers of pupils that have to travel outside of their local community to secure education. This reduces travelling times and costs whilst supporting community cohesion and enhancing equal opportunities.

## 6. Implications and Considerations

6.1 State how the proposals in this report contribute to the priorities in the [Council Plan](#):

Priority:	Contribution:
<p><b>Economy:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Revitalising our towns and local centres.</li> <li>2. UK Central (UKC) and maximising the opportunities of HS2.</li> <li>3. Increase the supply of housing, especially affordable and social housing.</li> </ol>	<p>These proposals seek to create additional specialist school places to meet increasing demand for places for pupils with EHCPs. Demand for places is increasing due to higher levels of complex need, growing school cohorts and families migrating into the Borough through new housing development</p>
<p><b>Environment:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Enhance Solihull's natural environment.</li> <li>5. Improve Solihull's air quality.</li> <li>6. Reduce Solihull's net carbon emissions.</li> </ol>	<p>By creating additional specialist places in Solihull, more families will be able to access places closer to home and limit the number that have to travel, in some cases significant distances, to access provision outside of Solihull.</p>
<p><b>People and Communities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Take action to improve life chances in our most disadvantaged communities.</li> <li>8. Enable communities to thrive.</li> <li>9. Sustainable, quality, affordable provision for adults &amp; children with complex needs.</li> </ol>	<p>Increasing the number of specialist places in 'good and outstanding' schools in Solihull will offer high quality school places, close to home, for some of our most vulnerable pupils. These proposals offer a more cost effective method of provision delivery, predicated on a model of creating two places in Solihull for the cost of one place in Independent provision outside of Solihull.</p>

6.2 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.2.1 On 30<sup>th</sup> November, Cabinet Member considered the outcome of a 6 week period of consultation on these proposals to add additional specialist places to schools in Solihull.

6.2.2 In January 2021, a further 4 week period of consultation has been undertaken as part of the statutory process to make these changes. The responses to this period of consultation are attached at Appendix A.

6.2.3 The Parent/Carer Voice Group and the North Solihull parents support group have supported this latest consultation process by sharing the consultation information with their parent network.

- 6.2.4 No report has been considered by Scrutiny Board.
- 6.3 Financial implications:
- 6.3.1 These proposals are part of the Dedicated Schools Grant – High Needs Block Recovery Plan. The revised plan was reported to and approved by Cabinet on 5 November 2020.
- 6.4 **Revenue** – For the Mill Lodge proposal a funding model based on an appropriate staffing structure has been developed with the school. The provision will cater for up to 8 pupils at a place value of £25,800 per place, a total revenue cost of £206,000. The ultimate purpose is to prevent the need longer term for an equivalent out of borough placement at an average cost of £50,000 per annum.
- 6.4.1 The expansion of Reynolds Cross Special School will seek to create an additional 20 places over the two year implementation period at £19,412 or £24,404 per place depending on pupil need, at an estimated total revenue cost of £418,000 (14 lower cost places, 6 higher cost places). Places in special schools outside of Solihull typically cost circa £40,000 per place plus travel costs.
- 6.5 **Capital** – Both projects have been the subject of feasibility work, undertaken by the Property Services Team, and involved consultation with relevant officers and school stakeholders.
- 6.5.1 The feasibility work has shown that the Mill Lodge accommodation can be remodelled and equipped to make an environment suitable to provide a sensory environment for the students identified. The Children Services Capital Programme includes a budgetary cost of £75,000. Feasibility work at Coronation Youth Centre has also identified that the Centre can be remodelled to make an appropriate space for school use, based upon its usage by older pupils, and still provide support for a wider youth offer at a cost of £150,000.
- 6.5.2 The capital requirement for both projects will be met from the Children’s Services Capital Programme.
- 6.6 Legal implications:
- 6.6.1 Changes to schools, of this nature, require a statutory process as determined by DfE guidance on making prescribed alternations to school.
- 6.6.2 Officers are satisfied that the requirements of the guidance have been met.
- 6.7 Risk implications:
- 6.7.1 One of the key risks is that additional specialist provision cannot be added in time to meet the growth in demand that is forecast. This will increase the Council’s reliance on out of Borough high cost provision and associated additional travel costs.
- 6.7.2 The proposal to expand Reynolds Cross Special School will require planning approval before it can proceed.

6.8 Equality implications:

6.8.1 These proposals seek to enhance the educational offer available in Solihull for pupils with Special Educational Needs and seeks to support wider inclusion for all pupils by offering a range of educational provision.

**7. List of appendices referred to**

7.1 Appendix A – Response to statutory consultation process.

**8. Background papers used to compile this report**

8.1 Cabinet Member reports – 7 September 2020 and 30<sup>th</sup> November 2020

**9. List of other relevant documents**

9.1 DfE guidance – Making prescribed alterations to schools