

## **Proposal to make changes in provision at: Oaklands Park and Ratcliffe Special Schools, Dawlish, Devon**

### **School and LA details**

Devon County Council, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QD

Oaklands Park School, John Nash Drive, Dawlish, Devon, EX7 9SF

Ratcliffe School, John Nash Drive, Dawlish, Devon, EX7 9RZ

### **Description of alterations**

Ratcliffe School and Oaklands Park School in Dawlish, Devon are part of the Dawlish Federation of Special Schools and the SENTient Co-operative Trust.

Oaklands Park School currently offers 60 registered places which includes 17 residential places for boys and girls aged 3-19.

Ratcliffe School currently offers 96 places which includes 36 residential places for boys and girls aged 5-16.

The Governing Body is proposing to merge the two schools and to operate as a single provision across both existing school sites. The proposal is to merge residential provision from April 2018 and to merge the whole school from September 2018. The school will continue to provide 156 registered places but it is planned to increase the number of registered places to 190 in the future.

The proposal is to reduce residential places to 35 residential places. It is also proposed to change from termly residential provision to weekly residential provision only.

The school will provide a continuum of provision for pupils that it is currently designated to take. Pupils with communication and interaction difficulties, ASC learning difficulties and social development needs will continue to be placed in the merged school.

### **Evidence of demand**

Over the past year, demand for residential places has continued to reduce. There has been a general national shift away from termly residential provision and more emphasis on the importance of a balance between weekly residential provision and young people being able to return home at the weekends. Local Authority maintained special needs provision should always be constantly assessed against quality of provision, changing patterns of demand and varying levels of funding. The changes proposed will merge both residential special school provisions to form one more efficient and cost effective weekly residential special school provision.

### **Objectives:**

Merging the two schools and only offering weekly residential placements will enable the school to more efficiently and effectively meet the needs of pupils and safeguard the future of provision.

## Education standards and curriculum

The residential provision of Oaklands Park School was inspected by Ofsted (social care) in June 2016 and required improvement. At the time of the inspection, the residential provision was in a period of a change following the closure of the Children's Homes and the establishment of the residential special school provision. The report concludes that the Executive Head has a vision for the school and an action plan that identifies and addresses areas for improvement.

Oaklands Park School was inspected by Ofsted (education) in February 2016 and required improvement. A follow up monitoring inspection visit confirmed that senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified.

The residential provision of Ratcliffe School was inspected in September 2016 and required improvement. The residential provision is an integral part of the school and is given high value. Young people who use the service are well respected and their placements are seen as a positive experience.

Ratcliffe School was inspected by Ofsted in March 2015 and was Good. Good teaching features across the school and there are examples of outstanding practice in all key stages. Pupils make good progress from their starting points and achieve well.

The Ofsted reports are available via: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

The formation of the Dawlish Federation of Special Schools has provided an insight into what can be achieved through working together; raising standards of education and care through shared resources, ideas and good practice. This has resulted in better educational opportunities and care for more children and young people.

## Improvement in standards, quality and range of educational provision

The changes proposed will merge both residential school provisions to form one more efficient and cost effective weekly residential provision. As one Special School including residential provision, all pupils will benefit from the combined skills, knowledge and expertise of the staff team alongside benefiting from the combined resources, buildings and environment that exists within the two schools. It is anticipated that this will have a positive impact on the outcomes of the children.

## The effect on other Schools, Academies and educational institutions in the area:

The proposals will not have a negative effect on other schools and would continue to support them by providing specialist provision for children who are not managing or progressing in a mainstream setting.

## Project Costs

There are no immediate capital costs and no building works planned immediately. The future plans to increase the registered number of places will require capital investment to develop appropriate facilities. Capital funds have been approved to support the initial design costs of a site development plan which will commence early in the new calendar year.

## Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation:

The residential provisions will be merged from April 2018 and the two schools will merge in August 2018, reopening as one Residential Special School in September 2018.

## Effect on existing pupils

All current and future residential pupils will have a weekly residential placement. The school will no longer be in a position to offer termly residential placements. Pupils will continue to be placed within class groups with peers who they can relate to and who collectively will be able to support each other's holistic development – academically, socially and emotionally.

In planning and commissioning SEND provision the proposals are in line with Devon's Local Offer to ensure that children and young people with SEND should have the expectation to be part of their local community, the Strategic Review of Special Needs places in the County and policies and procedures contained within the Education Infrastructure Plan 2016-2033. Our multi-agency approach has a strong focus on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND as well as involving them and their families in developing provision.

## Consultation

The consultation period was from 1 November 2017 to 13 December 2017.

An Information Session attended by parents, staff, union representatives and a resident was held by the Governing Body and Devon County Council on 16 November 2017.

24 written and verbal responses (made at the Information Session) have been received: 4 responses from pupils, 17 parental responses, 1 staff response and 2 other public responses.

The pupils who responded to the consultation were angry about the changes and anxious about staff leaving. One pupil felt this was not being done in the best interest of pupils but to save money and felt their opinion would not be heard.

Many of the written responses received and communicated verbally at the Information Session were from concerned parents asking questions relating to the impact of the proposal on their child and questioned how the change would be managed, how class sizes would be affected, how pupils would be supported and the effect of the reduction in residential provision.

Some parents were unhappy with the way the consultation had been communicated to students with some students having been notified on the same day as parents which had caused anxiety.

Some of the parents who responded were greatly concerned and strongly objected to the proposals planned. Parents were concerned with the mixing of needs between the two schools and the effect on some of the children being exposed to behavioural issues. These concerns were also raised at the Information Session held at the school. A parent also responded that they felt it was discriminatory for the school to no longer offer termly residential provision.

The concerns raised above are largely addressed in the Report of the Information Session available via:

<https://new.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay/consultations/consultation-joint-changes-provision-oaklands-park-school-ratcliffe-school-dawlish/>

## Response to Brief Notice

You can object to or comment on the proposals by:

Emailing: [schoolconsultations@devon.gov.uk](mailto:schoolconsultations@devon.gov.uk)

Writing to: Strategic Planning Children's Services, Room AB2, Devon County Council, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4QD.

by the closing date of **5pm on 31 January 2018.**