

# Consultation: Proposals on the future of the Hearing Support Resource Base at Overton Grange School

January 2018

## Introduction

1. The London Borough of Sutton, in common with all other local authorities, is facing severe financial pressures. In this context, we have been reviewing our support for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to ensure that we are targeting out resources of areas of greatest need. Over the past few months we have been reviewing all of our provision to better align our spending against needs. This has resulted in a number of proposals to, in some cases, increase provision whilst, in other areas, reducing or ceasing provision where demand has declined. These decisions are never easy but it is vital that we spend public money wisely and according to need. An initial round of informal public consultation took place on the draft SEN strategy between November and December 2017. The results of that consultation were shared with members on 4 January 2018 with a decision to proceed to formal consultation on some proposals including this one.
2. This paper outlines options on potential changes to the Hearing Support Department (Unit) at Overton Grange School with effect from September 2018. There are three options under consideration. Whichever option is chosen, all young people currently attending the Unit will continue to receive their education, with support, at the school until their natural point of transfer.

## Background

3. Overton Grange School is an academy that hosts a Hearing Support Department offering up to 14 places for pupils with Statements of Special Educational Needs/Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The academy receives enhanced funding to provide specialist resources and teaching expertise for pupils placed in the unit.
4. The number of pupils placed at the unit has remained consistently low across the last few years and currently only 3 of the 14 places are in use by Sutton young people. There may be a number of reasons for this such as advances in technology, or a more flexible approach to providing support making it easier for young people to thrive in other schools. Currently, the majority of young people living in the borough of secondary age and with Hearing Impairments (HI) attend schools other than Overton Grange.

5. Nationally, many local authorities are changing the way they support children with hearing impairment. An increasing proportion have their needs met in their local mainstream school, which we welcome. However, a small number may benefit from more intensive support, such as is available at Overton Grange.
6. Locally, evidence shows there are a small number of parents of children with hearing impairment of primary age who seek places at the unit. Of the 3 HI students currently attending the Unit, one came from Rushy Meadow, the others from other mainstream schools. One of the two children leaving Rushy Meadow in August 2018 has expressed a preference for a place at Overton Grange, meaning that the numbers of pupils in the unit will rise to 4 children but well below the existing commissioned number and hence the number of places that are being funded.

## Proposal

7. In light of the above, 3 options are being considered for September 2018 onward. These are:
  - a) No change - to leave the number of commissioned places at 14
  - b) To reduce the number of commissioned places to a lower number to ensure that all pupils whose parents wish it can access a place, but not so many as to result in long term and costly unfilled places
  - c) To close the Unit to all new admissions from September 2018, whilst maintaining support for all existing pupils whose parents wish it.

## Staffing implications

8. Whichever option is chosen there will be a range of implications for current staff. If either option one or two is chosen, all staff will stay at the school, although duties may change to meet the school's needs. If option 3 is chosen, staff may still continue to be employed by the school, or may transfer to the centrally employed HI team, managed by Cognus.
9. Whichever option is chosen, we anticipate that all existing staff will continue to be employed. This is because, although the unit may reduce or close, we will continue to provide expert support to present and future generations of children in whichever school they attend.

## Pupil transition

10. All existing pupils (and, in the case of options one and two, all future pupils) will continue to be supported during their time at Overton School.
11. If option 3 is chosen, it is proposed that, in future, each child's EHCP will be amended in year 6, and that a secondary school will be named in accordance with parental preference and the needs of the child. The EHCP will also state the level of support required to ensure the child or young person can access the curriculum in whichever school they attend (which may, of course, be Overton Grange).

## Finance and Resourcing

12. At present, each of the 14 commissioned places at Overton Grange attracts £10,000, plus £4,291 top-up for each child who attends. At present, therefore, the unit costs £140,000 each year, plus an additional £12,873 in top-ups, which equates to over £50,000 for each pupil currently attending. Reducing the number or places, or closing the unit, would allow for more money to be used to support other children with high needs. If option 2 (reducing the number of places) is chosen, the school will continue to receive £10,000 per place, plus a top up of £4,291 per pupil.

## Have your say

13. London Borough of Sutton, in partnership with Overton Grange School, would like to know what parents in the area think about the proposal.
14. We welcome comments and questions from parents or other interested parties regarding future provision for children with HI across the borough.
  - The Consultation period will open on 15th January 2018, and close on 12th February 2018.
  - There will be a meeting for parents and other interested parties on Monday 29th January at 6.30pm at the School. You do not need to register your attendance

## Next Steps

15. Ultimately decisions on where to place pupils with SEN are taken by the Local Authority. It is anticipated that Councillors at the London Borough of Sutton will consider the responses to the consultation and make a final decision on Wednesday 14th March 2018. Should members decide to either reduce the number of places, or to cease funding the unit, changes will come into effect in September 2018.

You can respond by:

1) Completing our online response form:

<https://sutton.citizenspace.com/chief-executives-group/proposed-closure-of-the-hearing-support-resource-c>

2) Completing the consultation response form that is available alongside this document. You can email the form or print it, complete it and send it back to the Local Authority at the following address:

Olivia McKenna  
Floor 2, Civic Centre  
Sutton  
SM1 1EA

2) Emailing [Olivia.mckenna@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:Olivia.mckenna@sutton.gov.uk) directly

All responses will be shared with Overton Grange

**All responses must be received by 12th February 2018**