

**Consultation – Q&A Session at  
Coteford Infant School  
Friday 4th October  
2.30pm – 3.30pm  
Notes**

**LA Officers (O):** Gary Binstead , Sonal Sisodia & Nav Minhas  
**Consultees (C):** 17 Attendees

**C: Please explain the proposal**

**O:** The proposal is to close to the PD SRP at Coteford Infant School. The current provision provides support for 3 pupils, and this will go down to 2 when a pupil leaves the school in July 2025. There is less demand nationally for separate SRP provision for pupils with physical disabilities. The expectation is that pupils should be able to access all mainstream schools, with reasonable adjustments.

Normally there are separate additional facilities on a mainstream school site for an SRP, where pupils can spend 20%-50% of their time, and then access mainstream lessons for the rest of their time. The school has a good model of resources and support, and the Council are not proposing to take this away. The support outlined in the pupil's EHCP will continue. If the proposal is successful, the change will happen from September 2025.

**C: The school SENCO commented that a parent wanted to be here but unable to attend. They had visited the school with an EHCP and expected to be able to attend the SRP but has since been told that they are not allowed to attend the SRP. Why was pupil not allowed to attend the SRP if the decision has not been made?**

**O:** Officers confirmed that no decision has been made. The consultation process has started, and Officers will review all responses. It was requested that the parent share details with Officers to review and discuss directly as it is not appropriate to discuss individual cases during this event.

**C:** Statement read out by staff on behalf of parent that could not attend in support of above.

**C: Do you have any statistics on who has been rejected a place at the SRP?**

**O:** Decisions are made as part of the assessment process and the needs of the child are based on the views by the professional on whether a mainstream, SRP, or special school provision is appropriate. This is not the view of Council officers alone, but from a range of

professionals through the statutory needs assessment process.

If parents are not happy with a decision, then they have a right to appeal through mediation and a tribunal. Officers want to work with parents to ensure that the needs of pupils are met appropriately.

**C: School staff expressed the view that EHCPs are written without the support of therapists and feel like they are fighting with the Council on occasions. The school needs the funding to be able to offer and support the assessments, training and expertise that comes through private therapists. NHS services are stretched. Has anyone spoken to the Borough wide therapy service? The school does not get the same service from the Borough wide therapy service as they do from private therapists. If pupils are off sick the NHS do not have the capacity to see the child at home.**

**O:** It is never the intention or desire of the Council to fight with anyone, but to focus on meeting the needs of children and young people appropriately, based on their assessed needs. The Council are in regular conversations with the Borough wide therapy provider to ensure that the appropriate levels of service delivery are maintained. Children will have their needs met as outlined in their EHCP as is the current situation at the school, whether through the Borough wide therapy provider or through private therapists at the school.

**C: Observation is that resources are overstretched. What resources are being provided to a child without needs if the time is spent by staff resolving queries? Feels like the school's identity is being taken away.**

**O:** Appropriate funding is provided to the school in line with assessed needs and the schools funding formula.

**C: Finance are being taken away. School is being funded 1/3 of what they would get if a child went to a special school should parents want their child to go there. Finance linked to the SRP is needed and support provided by staff. Top up funding will have a huge impact.**

**O:** No funding is being removed from the school, or the pupils on roll at the SRP as a result of this proposal.

**Want other schools to be just as inclusive but parents are pushed towards Coteford Infant School. Push for mainstream for all with special schools for children with the most complex needs.**

**O:** All schools have a duty to be inclusive and make reasonable adjustments for pupils

with additional needs, whether they have an EHCP or not.

The proposal is not taking away funding or resources, but proposing changes following a review in January 2024 where data shows the number of children with Autism and SEMH is increasing, and the demand for specialist provision for children and young people with physical disabilities is declining. Schools have a duty to be inclusive, and the wishes of parents wanting their children to attend mainstream schools must be respected and supported so that children and young people can build relationships with peers in their choice of mainstream school as appropriate.

The LA has provided over 70 additional specialist places in mainstream primary schools across the borough in SRPs and DUs over the last 12 months, for children with Autism and communication needs due to increased demand and are now looking at additional specialist places in secondary schools.

At this point, the Council have put forward a proposal, the consultation is underway to remove the SRP in name only. If approved the 2 children currently in the SRP who are due to be on roll at the SRP from September 2025 will continue to be supported fully until they leave the school. The pupils will continue to receive the level of support as detailed in their EHCP.

**C: The school staff expressed a view that taking 3 private therapists away from the school will cause the responsibility to fall on therapists from the Borough wide therapy provider. If a child has an EHCP, how much contact should a child get?**

**O:** The level of support and contact required to meet the needs of each child or young person is outlined in their EHCP. If parents do not agree to what is written in their plan they can appeal to the Council and then to a tribunal.

**C: School, staff commented that changing therapists could be excruciating for the child. How does communication work for 3 therapists not linked by the SRP? Who will co-ordinate this going forward? Children will only grow if there is consistency. Will there be an impact assessment? We have a Multidiscipline approach and concerned about delivery from the Borough wide therapy provider.**

**O:** The Council manage a contract with the Borough wide therapy provider and currently the therapy service is fully staffed. Any therapists provided through the Borough wide therapy provider will ensure that there is robust and thorough communication, and all will work for the same organisation. Officers agreed that a team around the child approach is very important.

**C: School staff did not think that without private therapists they can provide support to pupils with complex needs. Need the finance to support complex needs.**

**O:** A funding review is underway with all schools on how to consistently describe and fund the needs of all children and young people. Appropriate funding is in place to allow all schools to be inclusive and support the needs of children and young people. Top up funding based on assessed needs is provided for each child or young person.

Mainstream schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments for children with additional needs, and they can apply for funding for any necessary equipment through the Council's equipment policy. This can be reviewed on a case by case basis.

**C: School staff asked why do we want to take away the SRP? The school is recognised as a great school. Worried as a teacher, as feels that they will not be able to provide what pupils need. How much would other schools need to make adjustments?**

**O:** Officers are responding to the changing demand for specialist provision for children and young people with physical disabilities and parents must have a choice for their child's school. All schools have a duty to be fully inclusive and should not be signposting other schools when they are able to meet the needs of children and young people with reasonable adjustments. The Council discuss inclusion with all schools regularly related to their statutory duties, and officers asked the school staff to share details of schools they have evidence are not acting in line with their duties.

**C: Consultees suggested they could create demand for the PD SRP. Costs and a more detailed plan were requested as part of the proposal, and it was suggested that there was not sufficient detail in the proposal. There was also a request to be included in discussions with the Borough wide therapy provider to give confidence back to the parents that needs are being met.**

**O:** It was felt that there was sufficient detail in the proposal, but officers agreed to review the information and look at anything specific that was requested as part of the consultation.

Officers offered reassurance regarding the performance and ongoing dialogue that the Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB) have with the Borough wide therapy provider regarding their service, as this is a jointly commissioned service. Families of children on roll at the SRP would be involved in discussions if the Borough wide therapy provider was going to take on responsibility for the support of the children on roll at the SRP, and a robust handover would take place between therapists if this was agreed.

**C: Children in the SRP will not respond well to change to different therapists. Proposal should be put forward to retain private therapists for continuity.**

**O:** This will be considered as part of any proposed changes to therapy provision.

**C: Is the same conversation happening with Coteford Junior School.**

**O:** The Council are reviewing all specialist provision across the Borough and will have individual conversations with schools affected by the review at the appropriate time.

**C: A comparison made between service provided by private hospitals and private schools to the service offered by the NHS and state schools. Access to the Borough wide therapy provider is difficult.**

**O:** Officers confirmed that being a private therapist does not necessarily mean you are better trained or more qualified than NHS providers. A qualified therapist is expected to have the same qualifications regardless of who they work for. It was felt that this was an unfair statement or comparison to make.

**C: Are there any more children being blocked to SRP as there are 7 places at the school and they could offer more.**

**O:** Children are not being blocked from accessing the PD SRP at Coteford, but demand has reduced.

**C: Example provided where the school did not need to get a chair for a child to support them in the classroom as they already had the equipment. OT did not carry out any more assessments and the school physio offered her assistance. They have the luxury at the school to call upon assistance which is not the same level as the NHS.**

**O:** This was noted by officers, and it was not possible to compare individual cases without specific information, which was to be raised separately by the school as appropriate.

**C: Parents are buying property in the area to get into the catchment area. The school have never had a separate unit, why is this being proposed now? It's the same model but should have been funded differently.**

**O:** The Council is reviewing all specialist provision and assessing demand. Access to the SRP is through a process of assessment, but any child or family can request a place at any school in the Borough through the relevant admissions process.

**C: Other SRPs are not providing as much as this SRP.**

**O:** This consultation is not related to the quality of provision, but with the lack of demand

for the provision.

**C: The school felt they deserved more funding as they felt they are a model example.**

**O:** There is not a demand for places at the PD SRP, and families should be able to make an informed choice about where to send their children with a physical disability, as all schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to meet their needs.

**C: It's not possible for accessibility in all schools**

**O:** Schools have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to meet the needs of children and young people.

**C: - How this process is being conducted is upsetting**

- 5-year plan for SEND is lovely and we should be making plans before we closing any provision. I Support the Council on inclusion but this is not the right way round.
- if funding is not provided for private therapists, how are they meant to provide therapy. Pupils will become children with EHCPs, and the school don't want them to struggle.
- impact on the classroom. Meeting the needs of all children in the classroom will become more challenging as they have to deliver therapies. Staffing is already stretched.

**O:** There are not any plans to remove funding for the children in the SRP as a result of this proposal, and the Council continue to work with all schools, partners and stakeholders to implement the SEND and Alternative Provision strategy and ensure all school demonstrate inclusive practice to meet the needs of all children and young people.

As all children on roll at the SRP are in mainstream lessons full time, there is not expected to be any impact on the classroom as a result of this proposal.

**C: The school are staffed accordingly for pupils who may not be coming in, what will happen, will they have to lose staff?**

**O:** No funding for the pupils on roll at the SRP will be removed as a result of this proposal.

**C:** can notes/ minutes be shared and can an email address be provided. What are next steps.

**O:** There is the ability to respond through the consultation, and there is also an email address provided. Following the consultation, the proposal will be reviewed, and a report

will go to the Children, Families & Education Select Committee on 13th November with the relevant recommendations. The information about members of the committee is on the Council website and additional information on committee and Cabinet dates have also been shared with the school.

**C: Can people attend Committee meetings and Cabinet?**

**O:** Officers will confirm if the meeting is open to the public.

**C: Should a child come along to the school and request a place in the SRP, what will happen?**

**O:** Currently an application would need to be made for an Education, Health, and Care Needs Assessment if the child did not have an EHCP, and approval would be sought through the SEND panel process once the assessment had been completed. This is in line with the current process, and nothing has changed. The decision about whether to close the PD SRP at Coteford Infants will be taken after the consultation is complete by Hillingdon Council's Cabinet.

Session finished at 4.50pm

**Notes in response to questions raised:**

As requested, the email address to send comments regarding the consultation is:  
[schoolplaceplanning@Hillingdon.gov.uk](mailto:schoolplaceplanning@Hillingdon.gov.uk)

Councillors discuss the report but do not make decisions at the scrutiny committee meeting. The public can attend but have no speaking rights.