

SPECIALIST RESOURCE PROVISION FOR PHYSICAL DISABILITIES AT COTEFORD INFANT SCHOOL

Cabinet Member & Portfolio	Cllr Susan O'Brien - Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education
Responsible Officer	Julie Kelly – Corporate Director of Children Services
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Papers with report	Appendix 1 – Letter to school outlining reasons for the proposed SRP Appendix 2 – Letter outlining the process of closing an SRP Appendix 3 – Text for the school's webpage Appendix 4 – FAQ's about closing a SRP Appendix 5 – A letter for all the school community Appendix 6 – Public Notice Appendix 7 – Consultation Proposal

HEADLINES

Summary	<p>Cabinet is asked to consider the proposal to close the Physical Difficulties (PD) Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP) at Coteford Infant School having regard to the outcome of the Consultation.</p> <p>This proposal is in response to falling demand for places at the SRP, and the aim of supporting parental choice for children with a physical disability to attend mainstream schools, with reasonable adjustments as appropriate, alongside their peers.</p>
<p>Putting our Residents First</p> <p>Delivering on the Council Strategy 2022-2026</p>	<p>This report supports our ambition for residents / the Council of: An efficient, well-run, digital-enabled council working with partners to deliver services to improve the lives of all our residents</p> <p>This report supports our commitments to residents of: Thriving, Healthy Households</p> <p>This also supports the Local Area SEND & AP Strategy 2023-28 and the emerging Hillingdon Education Strategy.</p>
Financial Cost	There is no financial impact as a result of this proposal. Funding will remain the same for all pupils on roll at the SRP at Coteford Infant school, and no funding for these pupils will be withdrawn as a result of this proposal.
Select Committee	Children, Families and Education Select Committee
Ward(s)	Eastcote, All

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet:

- 1) In coming to a decision, has regard to the 292 responses and 2 petitions from the consultation in response to the proposed closure;**
- 2) Agrees the closure of the Specialist Resourced Provision for children with Physical Disabilities at Coteford Infant School.**

Reasons for recommendation(s)

School place planning is a statutory function of the Council as a Local Education Authority (LEA) and involves liaison with all schools and Trusts in the Borough, and with neighbouring Local Authorities. The duty is to have a sufficiency of school places to meet parent demand across the borough for all children, including those with Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND).

There is an expectation that all schools are inclusive with all children having their needs assessed where necessary, and the appropriate funding provided to the relevant school to enable them to meet those needs. Over the last few years there has been a decline in the demand for commissioned places at the Specialist Resourced Provision (SRP) for children with Physical Disabilities (PD) at Coteford Infant School and Officers followed the statutory process to consult to close the SRP.

The proposed closure of the SRP would not impact the support provided by the school for children as outlined in their Education, Health, and Care, Plan (EHCP), and the school would continue to receive the same level of funding for those pupils currently on roll at the SRP.

This proposal is to close the SRP at Coteford Infants at the end of the academic year 2024 / 25, and does not affect the mainstream school, which will continue to support children with a wide range of needs and abilities. The school will continue to offer education to the local community, and any parent / family will still be able to express a preference for their child to attend Coteford Infants, which will be assessed against the school's admissions criteria.

Coteford Infant School is a community-maintained school, rated 'Good' by Ofsted, which until August 2024, was a 3 Form Entry (FE) school. At the request of the school, due to a declining roll, a consultation to reduce the Published Admissions Number (PAN) was conducted by the Local Authority (LA) as the Admissions Authority for the school, in the period during the Autumn term 2022, between 24th October and 19th December 2022. The result of the consultation was to reduce the admission number to 2FE, with Cabinet approving the proposal in February 2023.

Coteford Infant School historically has had a SRP model for children with PD for up to 10 commissioned places although it is not based on a typical SRP model. Following the Cabinet decision in February 2023, the school approached the Council to request the commissioned places for the SRP to be reduced to 7 pupils taking into consideration the PAN reduction, which was approved to take effect from September 2024. This was agreed by the Council due to the declining demand for places.

Ordinarily, SRPs operate in a separate classroom or bespoke area within the school and there is a teacher assigned to the provision to oversee and deliver the curriculum to the children according to their needs. *“In SRPs pupils spend most of their time (usually well over 50% of their timetable) in mainstream classes. They only attend the SRP facilities for individual support, to learn a specific skill (for example braille for VI pupils), to receive medical or therapeutic support (for PD pupils) or to access specialist equipment.”* (Building bulletin 104, Dec 2015). Coteford Infant School has an alternative set up where there is no separate physical space where the children are taught, as they are fully integrated into mainstream classes for their entire timetable.

The proposed closure of the SRP would not impact children or families attending Coteford Infant school. This is because children on roll at the SRP are currently included in mainstream lessons full-time, and there is no separate provision in the school for the SRP, as is the case for a traditional model. The school is currently operating as an inclusive mainstream school. The difference between children on roll at the SRP compared to a child with an EHCP on roll in the mainstream school is the difference in who delivers the therapy provision - the type and level of therapy remains the same. Therefore, the school is already operating as an inclusive mainstream school for these children. The funding and the support for the children on roll at the SRP would not change as a result of this proposal.

Officers followed the statutory process to consult on proposals to close the SRP at Coteford Infants, and conversations have been ongoing with the school since the end of last year to understand the demand and provision available for pupils with physical disabilities, and the Council continues to work closely with the school regarding this proposal and process.

Alternative options considered / risk management

- I. No change and keep the SRP open at Coteford Infant school for Physical Disabilities**
This was not felt a suitable option as there is a lack of demand, and the 3 current pupils will leave the school in the next 2 years. There is also an expectation that children with a primary need of Physical Disabilities should be able to have their needs met in a mainstream school without the need for a SRP.
- II. Change the type of SRP at Coteford Infant school**
Coteford Infant school was offered the opportunity to consider hosting an alternative SRP or Designated Unit (DU) if the current PD SRP was closed, but the school declined the offer as they do not have any available space, and did not want to have any alternate specialist provision on site.

Democratic compliance / previous authority

Under the Council’s Constitution, Cabinet authority is required to determine school organisational changes where there are objections received.

Select Committee comments

This proposal was discussed at the Children, Families & Education Select Committee meeting on 13th November 2024, and the following comments were agreed following the meeting:

“Though the Committee recognises that the proposal to close the specialist resource provision (SRP) at Coteford Infant School has become a contentious issue within the local community, the committee was given assurances that the proposal to close the SRP will not impact the support provided by the school for the children with EHCPs, nor will it affect the mainstream school. Additionally, the school will continue to receive the same level of funding for those pupils currently on roll at the SRP until they leave the school.”

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Sufficiency of Places

1. Officers continue to review the sufficiency of high-quality specialist provision, in both mainstream and special school settings, to meet the future needs of children and young people with SEND in Hillingdon. This is underpinned by the [Hillingdon Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2023-28 - Hillingdon Council](#) with clearly defined ambitions:

Ambition 1: The right support, at the right time, in the right place

Ambition 2: Fully inclusive education for all

Ambition 3: Provision meets the needs of Hillingdon's children and young people

Ambition 4: Children and young people live happy and fulfilled lives where they are included in the community

Ambition 5: There is a flexible offer and range of interventions available for children to access Alternative Provision

2. As a result of the ongoing review, it has been identified that there is a greater demand for specialist provision for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), and the Council has increased the provision available in SRPs and Designated Units (DUs) by 72 places, with new settings opening during the last 12 months.
3. The Council is also working with more schools across the Borough to further increase the number of places available for secondary aged pupils with ASC and communication needs where there is still a high demand, which will allow more pupils to be educated in their local community with the appropriate support.



4. The ambitions within the new strategy highlight the importance of ensuring that we create provision that meets the needs of Hillingdon’s children and young people and enables them to receive excellent education in their local community.
5. As part of the ongoing review of all school places within the Council, maintained and specialist provision, it was noted that over the last few years there had been a decline in the demand for places on roll at the PD SRP (i.e. Physical Disability as the primary need) as detailed in the table below. This is in line with the expectation that children with physical disabilities should be able to have their needs met in any mainstream school with reasonable adjustments.
6. As of September 2024, there are only 3 pupils on roll at the SRP with one pupil in Year 2 moving out of the school at the end of this academic year. This will leave only 2 pupils on roll at the SRP at Coteford Infants in September 2025. Should this proposal be approved, these children will remain at the school and be part of the mainstream roll.

				Jan-20	Jan-21	Jan-22	Jan-23	Jan-24
School	Phase	Provision Type	Designated Need	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual	Actual
Coteford Infant School	Primary	SRP	PD	7	7	4	4	4

7. The reduced demand is also evident nationally as demonstrated in the table below, where the number of SRP or DU provision for children or young people with Physical Disability as their primary need has reduced by 37% over the last 4 years. It also shows that there has been a 22% reduction in the number of Councils with a SRP or DU supporting children with PD as their primary need, reducing from 58 to 45.

Description	2020 Total	2024 Total	Difference	Difference %
Number of Councils with a Specialist SRP or DU with PD as Primary need	58	45	-13	-22%
Number of Settings with a Specialist SRP or DU with PD as Primary need	110	69	-41	-37%

Data above obtained from Get Information About Schools (GIAS) 'Establishment Fields' on 28th October 2024

8. Many specialist settings support children and young people with a range of needs, and many children and young people have more than one need, dependent on their disability. For example, people with cerebral palsy may have minor or very complex symptoms, and this may or may not affect their physical, cognitive, and communication abilities. Therefore, children and young people with this condition may have different primary needs, based on the most relevant need at the time of the assessment, which may also change over time.

Equality Impact Assessment

9. An equality impact assessment was considered, however, as the children on roll at the SRP will continue to receive the same level of provision as outlined in their EHCP, and the school will receive the same level of funding, there is not expected to be any impact on these children from the proposed closure of the SRP. Also, unlike a traditional SRP, children on roll at the SRP at Coteford Infant's already spend the entire school day in mainstream lessons, and the school is, therefore, already supporting an inclusive education model for all pupils. Children with physical disabilities living in the borough currently not on the roll at the school will similarly not be impacted as their needs can be met in mainstream education with funding through an EHCP as necessary.

10. Therefore, there would not be any impact on the children currently on roll at the SRP as a result of the proposal as there would be:

- No change to the support outlined in the child's EHCP
- No change in the equipment provided
- No change in the level of funding provided to the school as a result of this proposal, as it will remain as it is for each pupil, as detailed in their individual EHCP

Financial Implications

Funding will remain the same for all pupils on roll at the SRP at Coteford Infant school, and no funding for these pupils will be withdrawn as a result of this proposal. The funding mechanism will change; SRP places are currently commissioned at the school for £6,000 per place. If the proposal is approved, the Council will no longer commission these places. However, Hillingdon operates a non-statutory funding stream called 'exceptional funding' which identifies schools with higher levels of EHCPs and funds children over an agreed level with an additional £6,000 per place to support schools who are highly inclusive. The school benefitted from this funding last year and continues to have higher levels of EHCPs supported in the school. Children who are part of the SRP are excluded from this funding due to the different funding mechanism, however, if the SRP is approved for closure, the children currently attending the SRP will become part of the mainstream roll and will therefore be included in the exceptional funding. Therefore, the funding the school receives in respect of the children attending the SRP will continue to be the same.

Coteford Infants are in an improving deficit position and officers are working with the school to support recovery towards a balanced budget. The Council finance and operational teams will continue to work with and support the school during this process.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient places for every resident pupil.

The Council must plan, organise and commission places for all state-funded schools in Hillingdon to ensure high standards are maintained, diverse school communities supported, and sufficient places are available. As part of this ongoing review and in line with [Hillingdon Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2023-28 - Hillingdon Council](#). This proposal will meet *Ambition 3: Provision meets the needs of Hillingdon's children and young people*.

Consultation & Engagement carried out

Taking into account that there is no longer a statutory 'pre-publication' consultation period for proposed prescribed alteration changes, it should be noted as part of the Council's commitment to meeting the needs of our children and young people and providing sufficient places at appropriate education settings, we continue to review the existing specialist provision in Hillingdon, to ensure we are able to meet the demand for places.

As part of the ongoing sufficiency review, officers have been liaising with the school since last year, including a discussion in February 2024 to understand how the space for the SRP was used. It was confirmed that the children on roll at the SRP are based in mainstream classes and fully integrated with mainstream peers. The school did not have a "unit" or separate area unlike a traditional SRP. Conversations continued with Coteford Infant School in June and July 2024 to discuss the needs of the children currently attending the provision and the level of support being provided as well as the proposal of removing the SRP.

During this time, Coteford Infant school was offered the opportunity to consider hosting an alternative SRP or DU if the current PD SRP was closed, but the school declined the offer as they do not have any available space, and did not want to have any alternate specialist provision on site.

Following the summer break another meeting was held with the school in September 2024 to confirm the proposal would progress with the understanding that information including FAQs, and the consultation process would be shared via the school with stakeholders ahead of the formal consultation.

Information about the consultation was shared by Officers with the school, which was added to their school's webpage prior to the consultation beginning in line with statutory guidance, with a link to the Hillingdon Council consultation pages:

- 13th September 2024 - a letter to the school outlining reasons for the proposed SRP closure (**Appendix 1**), a letter outlining the process of closing a SRP (**Appendix 2**), text for the school's webpage (**Appendix 3**) and FAQs about closing a SRP (**Appendix 4**),
- 18th September 2024 - a letter for all the school community (**Appendix 5**)
- 23rd September 2024 a link to the London Borough of Hillingdon consultation webpage was shared

Formal consultation on the proposal to close the Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) for Physical Disabilities (PD) at Coteford Infant School started on 25th September at 9am and ended on 25th October 2024 at 5pm. Public Notice of the proposal is set out in **Appendix 6** and the full proposal consulted on in **Appendix 7**. The Public Notice was published in the Gazette on the 25th of September and copies were put up surrounding the school site for the start of the consultation.

In addition, Officers contacted each of the 3 families of children on roll at the SRP in advance of the consultation to explain the process and the proposal, and assure them that the level of support, the provision, and the funding would not be changing, and therefore there would not be any change for their children. Engagement with these families has continued throughout the consultation, and Officers will continue to provide support for as long as necessary.

Statutory process

The prescribed alterations require a minimum of a 4-week consultation period. The formal consultation was designed to ensure that the following received notification of the consultation, in line with the guidance "Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools":

- the governing body/local authority (as appropriate);
- the parents of every registered pupil at the school – where the school is a special school;
- if it involves or is likely to affect a school which has been designated as having a religious character:
 - the Diocesan Boards of Education for any diocese of the CofE any part of which is comprised in the area of the local authority;
 - the bishop(s) of a diocese of the RC Church any part of which is comprised in the area of the local authority; or
 - the relevant faith group in relation to the school; and
- any other body or person that the proposer thinks is appropriate e.g., any affected educational institutions in the area, or neighbouring local authorities.

Proposals affecting a special school should go to any Council that has commissioned a place at the school (i.e., all relevant authorities who have made an out of county/borough placement there).

The consultation document was available from Wednesday 25th September 9am to Friday 25th October 2024 5pm on the consultation page of the Hillingdon Council website. This included a brief outline of the proposed change, the full proposal, and a questionnaire to obtain feedback in direct response to each proposal.

Information regarding the consultation was publicised to all the schools within the Borough via email.

As Hillingdon Council also receives school place applications from residents who live outside of the Borough, the consultation was designed to be inclusive. Therefore, officers contacted the following surrounding Councils to share details of the consultation:

- London Borough of Ealing
- London Borough of Hounslow
- London Borough of Brent
- London Borough of Harrow
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Slough Borough Council

The details of the proposal were also shared with the Hillingdon Parent Carer Forum.

The 3 families affected by the proposal who have children in the PD SRP were informed and consulted prior to the publication of the consultation, and officers have continued to speak with families during this process.

A virtual Question and Answer session with Officers took place on 2nd October 2024 from 5pm to 6pm for stakeholders to have the opportunity to ask questions about the proposal. There was one attendee whose views are included in the themes below.

There was also a drop-in session at the school where Officers were on hand to answer any questions in person and to explain the proposal as necessary. This was held on 4th October 2024, 2:30 to 3:30pm for stakeholders, including parents/guardians, school staff and residents. The intention was to meet with school staff separately from 3.30pm but the original session continued with all stakeholders until 4:50pm with 17 attendees; the majority of whom were staff. The views of attendees are included in the themes below.

Consultation Responses

292 responses were received in total during the consultation period with 290 submitted via the online questionnaire, and 2 further responses were received by email in support of keeping the SRP open. The responses are summarised below and detailed in full under the background papers for review, along with the notes from the face-to-face and online Q&A sessions.

During the consultation period, there were 208 page views of the Council's consultation page for Coteford infant school.

Online Questionnaire responses are summarised below:

1. **8** respondents agreed with the proposal to close the Physical Disabilities (PD) SRP provision at Coteford Infant School?
 - Yes - 8
 - No - 280
 - Don't know – 2

2. Of the **282** respondents that answered 'No' or 'Don't know', reasons have been summarised below in the paper
3. **10** respondents agreed that the proposed changes will not disadvantage any Hillingdon residents.
 - Yes - 277
 - No - 10
 - Don't know – 3
4. Of the **277** respondents that agreed that the changes will disadvantage Hillingdon residents' reasons have been summarised below in the paper.
5. **290** respondents have confirmed their interest in the proposal as:
 - A parent/ Carer/guardian – 96
 - A staff member – 17
 - A local resident – 108
 - Other – 45
 - Prefer not to say – 13
 - Blank - 11
6. **178** respondents stated that they have children under the age of 18 living in their household.
7. Respondents were invited to state which school(s) their child(ren) currently attend, and the responses were as follows:
 - Coteford Infant School - 30
 - Coteford Junior School – 20
 - Coteford (non-specified) - 17
 - Bishop Ramsey Church of England School – 4
 - Bishop Winnington-Ingram CofE School – 1
 - Deanesfield Primary School – 2
 - Field End Infant School – 1
 - Glebe Primary School – 3
 - Grangewood School – 2
 - Harefield Junior School – 1
 - Harefield Academy – 3
 - Harlyn Primary School – 3
 - Haydon School – 8
 - Home Educated – 1
 - Meadow High School – 4
 - Newnham Infant School – 2
 - Newnham Junior School – 1
 - Newnham (non-specified) - 4
 - Northwood School – 3
 - Oak Wood School – 2
 - Out of borough school – 17

- Pentland School – 1
- Queensmead School – 4
- Ruislip Gardens Primary School – 1
- Sacred Heart Primary School – 4
- Special School (non-specified) - 1
- The Willows School – 1
- Vyners School – 1
- Warrender Primary School – 3
- Whitehall Junior School – 1
- Whitehall (non-specified) - 1
- Whiteheath Infant School – 10
- Whiteheath Junior School – 2
- Whiteheath (non-specified) – 4
- No school recorded - 17

8. Additional comments from the questionnaire have been summarised below. Please see themes of consultation responses below:

It is important to note that many responses to the consultation did not specifically relate to the proposed closure of the SRP at Coteford Infants, but were in relation to wider funding, or education challenges. The information below seeks to set out the themes from the consultation which proposes to close the SRP at Coteford Infants. However, the mainstream school is not expected to be affected by this proposed closure and will continue to operate as an inclusive school for children with all levels of needs and abilities.

1. **Impact on Children with Disabilities:**

Many respondents emphasised that children with physical disabilities and special educational needs (SEN) rely heavily on the SRP for specialised support, therapies, and equipment that mainstream schools cannot adequately provide.

The expectation is that children with physical disabilities should be able to have their needs met in any mainstream school with reasonable adjustments based on parental preference. The school currently have only 3 pupils on roll at the SRP, reducing to 2 from September 2025, and 0 from September 2026 currently (based on current children).

As the level of funding available for each child will not change as a result of this proposal, the school have the choice whether to retain their current therapists, or to opt for a therapy service available to all other mainstream schools across Hillingdon, which is commissioned jointly between the Council and the Integrated Care Board (ICB), for the children on roll at the SRP. This jointly commissioned therapy service already supports children with an EHCP attending Coteford Infants who are in mainstream classes.

All therapy services delivered through the jointly commissioned service are delivered in a school setting in Hillingdon, unless a family requests the therapy to be delivered in a clinic as an exception. Therefore, regardless of the decision of the school, therapy will continue to be delivered at the school for any children who are currently on roll at the SRP. This is the current situation for all children accessing therapy across all Hillingdon mainstream schools, including children in Coteford Infants.

Concerns were raised about the negative impact on these children's education, physical development, and overall well-being if the SRP is closed.

The children on roll at the SRP are already based in mainstream classes and fully integrated with mainstream peers. The support for each child will remain as outlined in the child's individual EHCP and no support or funding is being removed as a result of this proposal. There will be no change to how the school operates or how the children are supported.

2. Lack of Alternative Provisions:

Respondents highlighted the absence of similar provisions in the area, meaning that closing the SRP would leave a significant gap in support for children with disabilities.

The expectation is that children with physical disabilities should be able to have their needs met in any mainstream school with reasonable adjustments and the provision in Section F of their EHCP being implemented. Increasingly parents want their children to be able to attend their local school with their siblings and children within their community with whom they can make friendships.

The potential increase in travel time and costs for families seeking alternative provisions outside the borough was also a major concern.

The expectation is that children with physical disabilities should be able to have their needs met in any mainstream school with reasonable adjustments based on parental preference. Any children whose needs are assessed to be significantly higher, or with a range of complex needs will be able to access a local special school, and there is a home to school travel policy available to support families ([School transport for children and young people with SEND - Hillingdon Council](#)).

3. Strain on Mainstream Schools:

There were worries that mainstream schools are already underfunded and overstretched, and integrating SRP students without additional resources would further strain teachers and staff.

The children on roll at the SRP are currently based in mainstream classes full time at Coteford Infants and fully integrated with mainstream peers. The support for each child will remain as outlined in the child's individual EHCP. Each child will have a level of funding that matches their assessed needs which will be provided to the relevant school, so the child can receive the appropriate level of support to meet their needs.

4. Historical Success and Community Trust:

The SRP at Coteford has a long history of success and is highly regarded within the community. Many respondents mentioned the trust and confidence they have in the school's ability to support children with disabilities.

Coteford Infants are a good example of an inclusive school, and they have a model of resources and support which the Council are not proposing to remove. The support outlined in the pupils' EHCP will continue, and we would expect the school to share its

model of inclusive practice with other schools across the Borough supporting more children and young people.

The SRP's closure is seen as a loss of a valuable and trusted resource that has benefited many families over the years.

The children on roll at the SRP are based in mainstream classes and fully integrated with mainstream peers. The support for each child will remain as outlined in the child's individual EHCP and we are not expecting any reduction in pupil funding as a result of this proposal. Parents will still be able to access the school through the school admissions process as they do currently, so there is not any change expected.

The staff currently employed by Coteford Infants are a valuable resource for the school and the wider community and will continue to support children across the school. As children on roll at the SRP are included in mainstream lessons all the time, there will not be any impact on staff from the proposed closure of the SRP, especially due to the low numbers of children on roll at the SRP compared to the overall pupils in the school (1.4%).

Headteachers and SENCOs across all schools meet on a regular basis to share best practice, and look for opportunities to work collaboratively, which provides plenty of scope to share learning and ideas to improve the experience of all children in Hillingdon schools.

5. Inclusive Education Benefits:

Several respondents pointed out the benefits of inclusive education, where children with and without disabilities learn together. This fosters understanding, empathy, and social integration among all students.

The children on roll at the SRP are based in mainstream classes and fully integrated with mainstream peers. The support for each child will remain as outlined in the child's individual EHCP. Other families that choose to access other mainstream schools also benefit from this model of education where all children are included regardless of any additional needs they may have and learn together with their peers.

This proposal is only to close the SRP at Coteford Infants, and does not affect the mainstream school, which will continue to support children with a wide range of needs and abilities. The school will continue to offer education to the local community, and any parent / family will still be able to express a preference for their child to attend Coteford Infants which will be assessed against the school's admissions criteria.

It is the expectation of the Council that all schools will offer inclusive education as outlined in the [Hillingdon Local Area SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2023-28 - Hillingdon Council](#). Although there were high numbers of objections to the proposed closure of the SRP through the consultation, many people commented that children with a physical disability should be able to learn alongside their peers without a physical disability which would benefit all pupils. Inclusion is a key driver for the proposed decision to close the PD SRP at Coteford Infants and enable all children and young people with a physical disability to be able to learn alongside their peers, regardless of any additional needs they all may have.

6. Concerns about Consultation Process:

Some respondents expressed skepticism about the consultation process, feeling that the decision to close the SRP had already been made and that the consultation was merely a formality.

The Council are following statutory process as per the guidance “Making significant changes (‘prescribed alterations’) to maintained schools.” As part of the review of specialist provision across the Borough, there were a number of discussions with this school and other schools before the consultation process started in line with best practice, to understand what proposals to put forward, based on evidence.

7. Advocacy for More Funding:

Many called for increased funding and resources for the SRP rather than its closure, arguing that investment in such provisions is crucial for the well-being and development of children with disabilities.

The expectation is that children with physical disabilities should be able to have their needs met in any mainstream school with reasonable adjustments based on parental preference. The core funding the Council receives from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is shared across all schools to meet the needs of all pupils fairly, and this process is overseen by the Schools Forum.

Each child will have their needs assessed through a thorough multi-agency process that results in the provision of an EHCP as relevant, whether they require a specialist provision or a mainstream school. This assessment will outline the support required to meet the needs of each child and there will be an appropriate level of funding provided to schools based on this assessment.

Schools are funded for delivering the provision outlined in their EHCP. If needs change over time, schools can request a review. This may require a re-assessment of the needs of the child and will be considered on an individual basis. This is to ensure that children and young people have the appropriate support to meet any changing needs, or exceptional circumstances.

8. Travel implications

A number of responses included reference to travel implications for families as a result of the closure of the SRP or related to children who attend the mainstream school.

It is not expected that any children will leave the school. The children in the SRP will not be affected as the funding and support will remain the same as a result of this proposal, and there will therefore not be any need for them to move school. As the proposed closure only relates to the SRP, the children in the mainstream school will not be affected and therefore there will not be any implication on travel as nothing will change.

Below is a table showing the distance that current pupils live from the school for reference.

Distance	Number of pupils
Up to 1 mile	168
Over 1 mile to 2 miles	22
Over 2 miles to 5 miles	30
Over 5 miles	1

As you can see, the vast majority of children of the 221 children currently attending the school live within 2 miles of the school (86%), with the rest of the pupils living within 5 miles, apart from 1 child who is living just over 5 miles from the school. All 3 children on roll at the SRP live between 2 and 5 miles from the school.

Petitions

During the consultation period, the Council received 2 petitions which were started by the ‘Friends of Coteford’, which are also being considered as part of this consultation, as permitted by the Council's Petition Scheme. One petition is in relation to the proposed closure of the PD SRP at Coteford Infants (a), and the other is in relation to admission to the PD SRP of an individual child (b).

(a) Closure of the Coteford PD SRP petition

A petition was received by the Council with a total of 1531 signatories before the end of the consultation (including 22 duplicate signatories), 1091 of these were London Borough of Hillingdon residents (71% of signatories). The details of the petition are below:

‘This petition “is to express the dissatisfaction of the LA's proposal to close the SRP unit at Coteford Infant School by the parents and local residents. We would like the Local Authority to reconsider the closure of the SRP unit and to consider the implications this will have on all children who attend the school. We would like the Local Authority to consider the eligibility criteria for children to be accepted into the Coteford Infant School SRP, to properly assess the demand for the SRP unit and to ensure the correct levels of funding are provided for a school where 23% of pupils have are on the SEND register, 6.5% have an EHCP which 2x higher than the national average, to ensure the SRP unit is able to function properly with correct levels of funding.”

The Council note the contents of the petition and highlight that the figures presented in the petition are incorrect. Having investigated the data shared, we can confirm that the figures recorded for the Spring Census 2024 which was completed by the school, and shown in table below demonstrate that Coteford Infant school do have a higher percentage of children across all measures compared to other benchmarking groups. However, schools with a SRP often have a higher number of children with an EHCP compared to the national average, as some families will still choose to send their child to the school as they believe they will have a better learning experience.

(as of Spring 2024)	National	London	Statistical Neighbors	Hillingdon	Coteford Infant School
% Pupils with EHCP	4.80%	4.90%	4.50%	4.90%	6.80%
% Pupils with SEN Support	13.60%	12.70%	12.50%	11.80%	17.60%
% Pupils on SEN Register	18.40%	17.60%	16.90%	16.70%	24.40%

Please note that the figures in the table are including the 3 pupils on roll at the SRP, so. If we remove these children from the calculation for Coteford Infants, the percentage of children with an EHCP at the school reduces to 5.5% compared to the national average of 4.9%.”

It is also important to note that Hillingdon schools have a policy in place to provide exceptional funding to schools whose percentage of EHCPs exceed an agreed value above their Number on Roll (NOR), of which Coteford Infant school is already a benefactor. This is in recognition of the higher-than-average number of children attending the school with an EHCP, and funding is paid at an additional £6,000 per child to all qualifying schools. This is non-statutory funding which the Council has decided to provide to schools who are highly inclusive to ensure they have sufficient notional funding to appropriately support their children’s needs.

This funding is specifically for children with EHCPs in mainstream schools and excludes children attending SRPs or DUs, as they are funded differently, with the £6,000 notional funding provided. In closing the SRP, the children would be counted as part of the exceptional funding figures. As Coteford Infant school has a higher-than-average number of children with EHCPs, the funding that would ordinarily be provided by commissioning places at the SRP will instead be provided via the exceptional funding stream. Therefore, the funding the school receives for these children will continue to remain the same.

If the number of children with an EHCP falls below the threshold at which the Council provides non-statutory exceptional funding, the Council will still provide the necessary funding for the children currently on roll at Coteford Infants SRP until they leave the school.

(b) Individual child admission to the SRP petition

A second petition was received relating to an individual pupil's circumstances, signed by 1230 signatories, of which 247 were London Borough of Hillingdon residents (20% of signatories). The details of the petition are below:

*The petition “is to express the dissatisfaction of the LA’s treatment of ***** , by not allowing ***** admission into the SRP unit at Coteford Infant School by local residents via change.org. We would like the Local Authority to reconsider the ***** admission into the SRP unit and to consider the implications this will have on ***** . This decision has impacted ***** right to thrive.”*

Although this second petition relates to an individual child, it does relate to the proposed closure of the PD SRP, and we have therefore taken the matter into consideration as part of the consultation. Council Officers are in contact with the family of this child directly to discuss the matter.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance have reviewed this report and concur with the Financial Implications set out above, noting there are no direct financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

Legal

Local authorities may propose changes to establish/alter or remove a SRP. They can do so by complying with the statutory process for prescribed alterations. The local authority must have regard to the consultation responses including the petition in reaching its decision.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [*Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools. Area guidelines and net capacity - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)*](#)
- [Individual Consultation Responses](#)
- [On-line consultation event notes](#)
- [Face to face consultation event notes](#)