



# Walsall Council

**Proposal to significantly enlarge: Old Hall school, Shepwell Short Stay School, The Jane Lane school (from 1 September 2018); Oakwood school and Mary Elliot school (from 1 September 2019).**

**Proposal to significantly enlarge and alter the designation of: Castle College of Business and Enterprise (from 1 September 2018).**

This proposal provides relevant information in accordance with the *School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013*.

## School Details:

Old Hall School	Shepwell Short Stay School	Castle Business & Enterprise College
Bentley Lane Walsall WS2 7LU	Bilston Lane Willenhall WV13 2QJ	Odell Road, Leamore, Walsall WS3 2ED
The Jane Lane School Churchill Road, Bentley, Walsall WS2 0JH	Oakwood School Druids Walk, Walsall Wood Walsall WS9 9JS	Mary Elliot School Leamore Lane Walsall WS2 7NR

## Local Authority Details:

Walsall Council - Civic Centre  
Darwall Street  
Walsall  
WS1 1TP

## Description of the proposal:

### 1. Introduction

The Council has a duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for resident children who want a school place. A local authority has a general duty, under section 14 of the Education Act 1996, to secure that there are available in its area sufficient schools "in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education".

The proposal is to increase the number of places at Jane Lane School, Castle Business and Enterprise College, Shepwell Short Stay School, Old Hall School (all from September 2018); and at Oakwood School and Mary Elliot School (both from September 2019). Additionally, Castle Business and Enterprise College are proposing to alter the school's designation to better reflect the type of special educational needs provision they make.

Architectural feasibility studies have been carried out at the six special schools. Delivery of these schemes is subject to a formal consultation on each of the proposals to significantly enlarge the schools and, in some cases, alter their designation. This consultation started on Thursday 2 November 2017 and will close on Thursday 30 November 2017. The outcome will be reported to Cabinet at its meeting on 13 December 2017.

## **Special Educational Needs profile**

The proposal to enlarge six of Walsall's special schools forms part of the Council's 5 year pupil place planning strategy.

There are over 51,000 pupils on roll in Walsall schools. Over 7,800 (15.2%) have some form of special educational need.

Just over 620 pupils are on roll in Walsall's existing special schools. That is 1.23% of the total number on roll.

The needs of most children with special educational needs are met in mainstream schools. 1,798 pupils or 3.5% of the total pupils on roll had a statement or Education Health and Care plan. There is also specialist provision for children with special educational needs within mainstream schools. There are 110 places in ARPs (additional resourced provision) in Walsall's mainstream schools. These meet a range of special educational needs and, in each case, support inclusion, as up to 80% of a young person's time may be spent in mainstream education.

Of the 7,849 pupils with some form of SEN, by far the largest category was MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulty) representing 38.4% of SEN pupils, followed by SLCN (Speech, Language and Communication Needs) at 18.2%; then SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs) at 12.3%. Like many other local authorities, Walsall has seen an increase in the number of diagnoses of ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) in recent years. There are now over 600 children with ASD in Walsall schools, 7.7% of the total number of pupils with SEN in schools.

### **Why these schools?**

The Children and Families Act 2014 says that children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) should be educated in mainstream schools and other mainstream provision unless their SEN require more specialist provision.

The total school age population of Walsall (in all schools) will continue to increase over the next 10 years – it is increasing by just under 1% a year, adding around 400 young people a year to the school age population.

There is a *pro rata* increase in the number of young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Around 15% of children have some form of special educational need. In Walsall, 3.5% have significant special educational needs and have either a statement or an Education Health and Care plan. Whilst the vast majority of children with SEN are in mainstream schools, the general increase in the school age population alone is enough to justify over 100 additional specialist places.

There has been an increase in the numbers of young people identified as having some form of SEND and the marked growth in particular types of SEND, such as ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder)- an increase of 15% over a 5 year period- and other more complex special needs.

No local authority is or ever will be self sufficient in its SEN provision. However, typically, there are over 200 children and young people a year going out of borough to school placements in other authority areas. Many are the nearest appropriate placement in neighbouring areas; others are in regionally based specialist provision, while around 70 or so a year are in independent specialist provision. Placement costs are typically higher than those in-borough, even more so when transport costs are added.

There is a decline nationally in the proportion of pupils with a statement or Education Health and Care plan who are in mainstream school settings. Also nationally, the Department for Education, forecast a significant (30%+) increase in the number of special school places that will be required in England up to 2024.

Virtually all Walsall's existing special schools are technically 'full' (in some cases, they are over capacity), the basic justification for the proposed increase in places. A surplus of between 5-10% of school places is also usually considered to be 'prudent'. Sufficiency and capacity studies were carried out at three of the special schools with visits and surveys of the other three schools before the feasibility studies were commissioned.

### **Old Hall Special school**

Old Hall School is a special school in Short Heath ward. It caters for children of nursery and primary school age with complex special educational needs. The school is a local authority maintained school and is currently rated Good by Ofsted. In terms of physical capacity, it currently has 60 places though 80 places have been commissioned/funded from April 2017. There were 4 nursery age children and 75 primary age children on roll in May. There were some internal adaptations to the school over the summer that created 8 additional teaching spaces.

The proposal is for a significant enlargement of the school of 16 places by September 2018.

(One of the design solutions offers 16 additional spaces plus a space that could be used either as a further classroom or library)

### **Shepwell School**

Shepwell school is a short stay school (medical needs) principally for pupils of secondary school age with provision for children on the Autistic spectrum (ASC). It provides home and hospital provision plus SEN outreach to other schools in the borough. It is in Willenhall South ward. It is a local authority maintained school and is currently rated as Good by Ofsted. There are currently 30 short stay places and 15 places in the provision for students with ASC.

The proposal is for a significant enlargement of the school of 15 places to 60 in total by September 2018.

A consultation will follow on a potential change in designation of the school which will continue to provide short stay places mainly for pupils of secondary school age (retaining also its home and hospital provision and SEN outreach).

## **Castle Business & Enterprise College**

Castle Business and Enterprise College is a school for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and additional special educational needs. It provides places for children and young people aged 7-19. In May 2017, there were 29 primary age pupils, 79 secondary age pupils and 20 post 16 students at Castle. It is in Bloxwich West ward. It is a local authority maintained school and is currently rated as Outstanding by Ofsted. It has a current capacity of 100 with around 120 commissioned places.

The proposal is to significantly enlarge the school's capacity by 30 places to 130 places from September 2018.

Additionally, it is proposed to change the school's designation from that of 'Business and Enterprise College' to 'Communication, Cognition and Learning' to better reflect the types of special educational needs it meets. The school will be re-named Castle School:

“At this time of significant and exciting change and expansion it is time to move away from the College status, as this does not reflect the current ethos and standing of our school. We are an 'Outstanding' School and wish to be identified as such and would like the consultation to take this into consideration”.

## **The Jane Lane School**

The Jane Lane School is a school for pupils with Cognition and Learning Difficulties. It provides places for children and young people aged 7-19. In May 2017, there were 26 primary age pupils, 66 secondary age pupils and 37 post 16 students at Jane Lane. It is in Bentley & Darlaston North ward. It is a local authority maintained school and is currently rated as Good by Ofsted. It has a current capacity of 120 with around 130 commissioned places.

The proposal is to increase capacity at the school by 30 places to 150 places by September 2018.

## **Oakwood School**

Oakwood School is a school for nursery and primary age pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) plus Medical Needs. In May 2017, there were 7 nursery age and 67 primary age pupils on roll. It is in Aldridge North & Walsall Wood ward. It is a local authority maintained school and is currently rated as Outstanding by Ofsted. It has a current capacity of 66 places with 75 commissioned places this year. 6 new places have been created in the school this year by creating a meeting room in a 'shepherd's hut' in the school yard. The proposal is to provide an additional 32 places in all – 6 have already been created and a further 26 places are proposed for the longer term.

The proposal is to increase capacity at the school by 32 places to 98 places by September 2019.

## **Mary Elliot School**

Mary Elliot School is a school for secondary age pupils with complex special educational needs and learning difficulties. In May 2017, there were 86 Year 7 – Year 11 pupils on roll and 40 post 16 students. (Many children from both Old Hall and Oakwood schools transfer to Mary Elliot). It is in Birchills Leamore ward. It is a local authority maintained school and is currently rated as Good by Ofsted. It has a current capacity of 110 places with 127 commissioned places this year.

The proposal is to provide 30 additional places at Mary Elliot school to 140 by September 2019.

## **Quality of Provision**

The proposals are to significantly enlarge six special schools in Walsall that are 'maintained' by the local authority. All special schools in Walsall are rated either as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. Statutory guidance is clear that "it is expected that, where possible, additional new places will only be provided at schools that have an overall Ofsted rating of 'good' or 'outstanding'". The proposals will create additional quality places to meet changing needs that parents and young people will find attractive and which will create conditions that will help to improve the educational outcomes for those young people. The Council's Head of School Improvement and her team have been consulted on each of the special school expansion proposals.

## **Consultation**

Where the local authority is the proposer of a change for a community special school and it wishes to increase by 10% or 20 pupils, or decrease numbers, it must follow a statutory process for making 'prescribed alterations' that includes a public consultation lasting 4 weeks.

Proposals to increase the size, age range or designation of schools, including special schools, are to be subject to a process of statutory consultation. For local authority maintained schools, the requirements are set out in the School Organisation Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools, England, Regulations 2013.

## **Effect on other schools in the area**

Additional places are needed in order to meet an increasing demand for special school places in the Walsall Borough the proposed expansion of these six special schools will enable the local authority to meet its statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient schools and school places available in each of the planning areas and will not jeopardise the viability of any other school, special or mainstream.

The other two special schools in Walsall are not included in this proposal. One, Phoenix school, is an academy. The second, Elmwood School is local authority maintained. Both provide places for pupils with SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health issues). We need to increase the number of places for young people with SEMH in Walsall, although no proposals are brought forward in this proposal at this time. We are working with both 'SEMH' schools and other providers in Walsall to develop provision in the borough.

## Site Arrangements

No new or additional sites will be required. Building work will be undertaken as necessary on the existing sites at the schools. A slight exception is at Oakwood School where it is proposed to expand the site of the school by taking a small proportion of the public open space to the south of the site to allow for the expansion.

## Programme Costs and Funding

The proposed expansions will involve extensions, alternations, remodelling or new buildings on all six school sites. The estimated cost of each of the proposed expansions and a brief description is as follows:

- **Old Hall Special School: £1,388,700 (including 20% contingency & fees):**  
The proposal in the feasibility study is to create 16 additional places at the school. The preferred option (D) involves the demolition of the caretaker's house, building a new larger scale (than in other options) new build classroom block with 3 classrooms and support facilities (medical, therapy) and extra car/bus parking in its place. This option includes more parking, an enlarged school entrance and a covered pupil drop-off canopy as well as an enlarged classroom in the main body of the school. The second option (B) provides a smaller classroom block to the eastern side of the school, taking over some of the garden space of the caretaker's house which is retained. It also provides the enlarged school entrance and canopy but delivers fewer additional parking spaces than option D.
- **Shepwell School: £1,478,214 (including 20% contingency & fees):**  
The preferred option from the feasibility study is to create 15 additional places principally for ASC young people by creating an extension to the existing building. The existing building requires remodelling to improve the existing teaching spaces and this preferred option provides a new main entrance. Additional parking and play spaces are also proposed.
- **Castle Business and Enterprise College: £1,754,463 (including 20% contingency & fees):**  
The preferred option from the feasibility study is to create 30 additional places through classroom extensions and/or new classroom blocks, with covered walkways built between the teaching blocks at the school. Each option is for an extension at different areas around the school and all are of a very similar cost. The school's preferred option is one that sees most of the new accommodation being built on the south side of the site.
- **The Jane Lane School: £1,601,887 (including 20% contingency & fees):**  
There are two main options brought toward. Both are for a new three classroom block creating 30 additional places with a choice of locations and also for a single class extension in addition at the north west of the main building. There are sub options that include covered walkways across the school site.
- **Oakwood School: £1,107,331 (including 20% contingency & fees):**

Three main options are brought forward to achieve a further 26 places, one of which is for a new 3 classroom block attached to the main school with dining areas in-filled and using some of the very limited hard play area at the school. The other two options both involve extending the site of the school to take a small proportion of the Council owned public open space to the south of the school. The existing school site is very constrained; it can only be adequately extended if further land is acquired.

- Mary Elliot School: £2,128,601 (including 20% contingency & fees):

Three building options were offered in the feasibility study. Option A2 – mainly a two storey extension to the rear of the school- is preferred by the school, giving 4 large classrooms and support facilities, but also increased parking provision as well as an extension to the existing dining hall. It has the least impact on both the existing building and the external pupil areas and it gives a degree of 'future proofing' by providing 30 rather than 20 additional places.

The total cost of all six schemes (including 20% contingency and fees) is £9,459,197.

Funding will be primarily from the Basic Need Capital fund though this will be supplemented by around £1million's worth of funding from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) revenue balances that was agreed by the Schools Forum in Walsall at its meeting on 9 December 2014. The Basic Need capital grant is allocated by the Department for Education (DfE) to local authorities, based on projections of the demand for additional school places and the capacity of schools to meet those demands. The local authority must demonstrate that there is a 'basic need' for additional school places in its area to attract the funding. Also, each of the six special schools will be asked to contribute towards the scheme with funding from their Devolved Formula Capital (DFC). The DFC is allocated from the DFE to the Local Authority and is sent directly to the schools on an annual basis to contribute towards school capital schemes.

## **Implementation**

The proposal would be implemented from 1 September 2018 in the cases of Old Hall school, Shepwell short stay school, Castle Business and Enterprise College and the Jane Lane school; in the cases of Oakwood and Mary Elliot school, from 1 September 2019.

**Details of how to respond to the proposal:**

The formal consultation period begins on Thursday 2 November 2017 concluding on Thursday 30 November October 2017.

Copies of the proposal and a specific proposal for each school can be obtained from: Claire Goss, Head of SENDI (Special Educational Needs, Disabilities and Inclusion), Tel: 01922 655761; Email [Claire.goss@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Claire.goss@walsall.gov.uk)) or from Philip Wells, SEND projects, Tel: 01922 655897; email [Philip.wells@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:Philip.wells@walsall.gov.uk)

Comments on the proposal should be made in writing to the following address:

Alex Haigh – School Organisation Manager,  
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WS1 1TP

Alternatively, by email to: [alex.haigh@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:alex.haigh@walsall.gov.uk)