**Statutory proposal to increase the place-funded numbers at Elmwood School**

This proposal provides relevant information in accordance with *The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.* Further consideration has been given to ‘Making significant changes (‘prescribed alterations’) to maintained schools’ – statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers, October 2018.

**School details:**

Elmwood School

King George Crescent

Rushall

Walsall

WS4 1EG

**Local Authority details:**

Walsall Council

Civic Centre

Darwall Street

Walsall Council

WS1 1TP

**Description of the proposal:**

1. **Introduction**

Elmwood School is a maintained community special school and is one of seven special schools in Walsall, established to meet the needs of children who have an EHCP. The school's catchment area is primarily the local Walsall area although some pupils come from neighbouring authorities. Elmwood caters for secondary aged pupils, 11 to 16 years of age, who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health difficulties, which is a difficulty in emotional regulation and / or social interaction and / or experiencing any mental health problems as their primary need, with additional complex needs. These may include Cognition and Learning; Communication and Interaction as secondary needs.

The school’s admission number is currently 56 and the proposal is to increase the school’s place-funded numbers to 67.

1. **Description of proposal and evidence**

The proposal is to increase capacity at the school so that an increasing number of children with complex special educational needs can attend a special school in their local area.

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

There is a pro rata increase in the number of children/young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

Since the SEND code of practice; 0 – 25 years was published in January 2015, there has been a decline nationally in the proportion of pupils with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan who are in mainstream settings. This situation may be linked to the 2015 SEND code of practice, which enables parents of children and young people with an EHC plan to request placement in a special school.

Furthermore, the Department for Education has forecast a significant (30 %+) national increase in the number of special school places that will be required in England up to 2024.

In Walsall around 15% of children have some form of special educational needs and 3.5% of the school population have an EHC plan. This compares to the national average of 11.7% and 2.9% respectively as identified by the DfE in July 2018. The local authority has issued 2,171 EHC plans in September 2019 and this figure compares with a total of 2,046 in September 2018.

Current figures (September 2019) indicate that a total of 783 children/young people are placed in a maintained special school or special academy. This number is likely to increase, since the demand for the local authority to undertake EHC needs assessments of children/young people within Walsall has also increased significantly i.e. from February – April 2019 there were a total of 168 requests. This compares to a total of 102 in the period September – November 2018. In September 2019 there were a total of 41 requests for an EHC needs assessment.

1. **Impact on the school and its pupils**

An Ofsted inspection in November 2018 identified that staff use very effective strategies to engage pupils in their learning. As a consequence, pupils study a range of qualifications at entry level and GCSE and the vast majority achieve or exceed their targets in English and mathematics.

The report also indicates that the school has created a calm and purposeful learning environment. Pupils are well behaved, respectful and polite. The relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. The pastoral support and welfare of pupils is a high priority. One hundred per cent of pupils consistently continue in education, employment or training when they leave Elmwood School.

Pupils told inspectors they were proud of their school and spoke positively about it. The student council and pupil voice are strong in the school. They are involved in the interview process, have influenced a staff uniform, raised money for charity and decided which charities to donate to. Pupils commented to inspectors that staff listen to them and help them work things out.

On this basis, the proposal to increase numbers at the school will not impact on the good education already in place for pupils. This proposal will not have a negative impact on other schools in the area, since demand for special school places is high.

1. **Statutory process**

Since the school is a maintained community special school, the local authority is acting as proposer to increase the school’s numbers with the full support of the school’s leadership team and the governing body. A statutory process for making ‘prescribed alterations’ to a maintained school must be followed in accordance with the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England), Regulations 2013. This sets out the statutory process for changing the number of pupils in a special school.

This statutory proposal to increase pupil numbers at the school will be published after the local authority and the school have engaged in consultations and public meetings with interested parties. Once the statutory proposal and formal notice have been published, this will be followed by a formal consultation process of 4 weeks. During this period any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal. The local authority will consider representations received and will then make a final decision about whether it is able to increase pupil numbers at the school.

1. **Implementation**

The proposal (subject to the statutory process) will be implemented immediately after the local authority has made its decision.

1. **Procedure for responses: support, objections and comments.**

The formal consultation period begins on 15/11/19 and concludes on 13/12/19.

Copies of the proposal can be obtained from:

Elmwood School

Email: postbox@elmwood.walsall.sch.uk

Tel.: 01922 710129

Or

Walsall Children’s Services - Access and Achievement

Dr Emma Thornbery, Interim Lead for SEN

Email: emma.thornbery@walsall.gov.uk

Tel.: 01922 721081

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

Dr Emma Thornbery

Interim Lead for SEND

Walsall Children’s Services – Access and Achievement

Education Development Centre,

Pelsall Lane,

Walsall, WS4 1NG.

Tel: 01922 652860

emma.thornbery@walsall.gov.uk