

Statutory Consultation

Proposal to expand the resource base at Castle Mead School

Introduction

The Mead Academy Trust in response to a request from Wiltshire Council proposes to expand its resource base (a Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision) at Castle Mead School, Trowbridge, Wiltshire by 15 places on a permanent basis. Due to exceptional need in the West Wiltshire area the resource base has hosted additional children on a temporary basis, at the request of the Local Authority, taking numbers to 29 during 21/22 academic year. This means that the total increase in places from the current temporarily increased capacity is an increase of 6 children.

This proposal has been developed in response to the increased demand for special educational needs provision in the West Wiltshire area and the success of the provision over the last year.

Should the permanent expansion of the resource base be agreed, TMAT, the council and the school will work together to ensure that all admissions are handled effectively and efficiently.

The Proposal

The resource base, which was established in 2017 for 20 pupils, was set up with an SEN designation of complex needs to support the needs of children who have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). Under this proposal the base would expand from 20 places to 35 across three classrooms. As is already the case the resource base would receive children with SEN from the local area, not limited to the school's mainstream catchment.

The expanded resource base place numbers would plan to be provided from as soon as is practicable in 2022/23 academic year, filling the additional places at a level and rate to ensure its continued quality and success of the provision.

The Published Admission Number of the school will remain the same and not be impacted by this proposal.

Wiltshire Council have requested this expansion at Castle Mead School to meet the needs of the growing number of children with SEND, particularly in West Wiltshire area.

The case for expanding the resource base at Castle Mead School

Wiltshire Council has a statutory duty to secure sufficient school places for pupils with special education needs (Children and Families Act 2014) and to ensure that these places provide both high quality provision and value for money. The council believes additional places at Castle Mead School will support this aim in being fulfilled within the West Wiltshire area and this is fully supported by the Trustees at TMAT. The expansion of the resource base at Castle Mead School is being proposed for the following reasons:

- Wiltshire Council has identified a demand for increased resource base provision in the West Wiltshire area
- Castle Mead School was judged to be a Good school by Ofsted at their last inspection in June 2017
- Castle Mead School are committed to inclusion and delivering a high-quality SEN provision the quality of which has been recognised externally in the last year and this is an opportunity to further that vision

- The resource base provision established in September 2017 has already carried out positive work with SEN pupils it caters for directly and for the wider development of inclusion across Castle Mead School.
- Existing, suitable indoor and outdoor space at the school have been identified for the resource base, with additional accommodation being added to the school in due course as part of the proposal.
- Castle Mead School are fully supportive of the proposal

The Outcomes of the Proposal

The Mead Academy Trust (TMAT), with the full support of Wiltshire Council is proposing to extend the resource base at Castle Mead School.

We believe that this will:

- Provide additional capacity to manage demand for SEN school places in Wiltshire, particularly in the West Wiltshire area where demand is high
- Support improved educational outcomes for children with SEN
- Support the further development of inclusive provision at Castle Mead School and TMAT, benefitting children beyond the resource base

This proposal is not expected to have any limiting impact on other local provision including local schools but will contribute towards parental choice.

Implementation

Following consultation, TMAT and Castle Mead School will work with the local authority to ensure that all admissions are handled effectively and efficiently. Pupils will start at the new resource base from September 2022.

The expansion of the resource base at Castle Mead School is part of a wider plan of increased SEN school place capacity across Wiltshire to ensure countywide SEN school place sufficiency.

Costs and Expenditure

Castle Mead School will receive SEN place funding for each child placed at the resource base and top up funding for each child which will vary according to the child's needs identified in their EHCP. The school, with support from the Trust, will be responsible for staffing and resources, and the local authority and the Trust have worked together to financially model the provision to ensure it is affordable and will not impact upon the mainstream school budget.

All statutory consultation requirements relating to these proposals have been complied with.

Face to face meetings

As part of this process and to enable us to discuss what is set out in this document and answer questions in a more interactive way we have identified three face to face sessions for different groups which you may like to attend:

Session 1: Staff of Castle Mead School and employees of TMAT

Wednesday 21st September, 3.15pm Castle Mead School, Forest Room.

Session 2: Parents of Castle Mead School

Thursday 22 September, 3.15pm , Castle Mead School, Forest Room.

Session 3: Other interested stakeholders

Thursday, 29th September, 3.15pm, Castle Mead School, Forest Room.

Appendix 1: Consultation Process Indicative Timeline

Stage 1	Publication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal will be published on Castle Mead Website websites for 4 weeks from 15/9/2022 until 7/10/2022 • A copy of the proposal has been sent to the Academy Advisory Group of Castle Mead School and Trustees of The Mead Academy Trust. • Castle Mead School will ensure that the information is released through a circulated update (this may be a paper or electronic newsletter or update) and shared with all parent/carers of all registered pupils in the weekly newsletter. • Local schools • Copies of the proposal will be available via the school, by contacting: admin@castlemead.wilts.sch.uk • Comments can be made using the via E-mail or letter to: Email contact: Consultation@themeadtrust.org <p><u>Address for written communication</u> Consultation Castle Mead School, Mascroft Road Trowbridge Wiltshire BA14 6GD</p> <p>Comments must be received by no later than the 7/10/2022 to be considered in the decision-making process.</p>
Stage 2	Representation (Formal consultation)	The period of consultation will run from 15/9/22 – 7/10/22
Stage 3	Decision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the representation period, a decision will be made by the end of October 2022 through the Regional Schools Commissioner and Regional Headteacher Board <p>The proposal can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Accepted ○ Rejected ○ Or accepted with modifications by the proposer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decision will be published within one week of the decision and; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ published on the same sites as the publication ○ sent to every registered pupil ○ and sent to the local governing body

Stage 4	Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If approved, the new resource base will open as soon as is practicable in the 22/23 Academic year but with likely intake starting from October 2022.• If the proposal is accepted the council and the school will work together to ensure that all admissions are handled effectively and efficiently.
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Appendix 2: Responses

Comments can be made via E-mail or letter:

Email contact: Consultation@themeadtrust.org

Address for written communication

Consultation
Castle Mead School,
Mascroft Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 6GD

If you choose to respond via letter, please use the consultation response template below:

Please note that all comments must be received by **7/10/2022**.

Consultation Response:				
Please circle your role:	Pupil	Parent/carer/ family	Governor	Member of staff
Do you agree with the proposal to expand the resource base at Castle Mead School?		Yes	No	Not sure
Please Comment:				
Do you think there are other options that should be explored? (Please describe)				
Are there any other comments you would like to make?				

Appendix 3: Further information and FAQs

This guide aims to explain what a resource base is, how it operates as an integral part of Castle Mead School.

Provision – What is a resource base?

The Resource Base at Castle Mead currently provides specialist provision for a group of children who have complex needs, including social communication needs and/or Autism (ASC). The children are currently taught in three class groups across three classroom bases. The aim is for the total number of children to rise to 35 pupils. Children who attend resource bases are often those who need provision that is higher than they would be able to access in a mainstream school, but who do not need to attend a special school. The children who will attend the Resource Base have a range of verbal communication skills – most are verbal and some communicate through communication aids. Children usually have a good level of physical skills and do not usually use wheelchairs or walking aids. The resource base classes at Castle Mead are called Bats 1, 2 and 3.

Admissions

Admissions to the Resource Base are entirely separate from places in the main school, and are made through Wiltshire's Special Educational Needs Admissions Panel. The Resource Base needs to be named on a child's EHCP for the child to have a place at a resource base. This is separate from the school's admission processes

Admissions Criteria

- EHCP identifying a complex needs profile
- Wiltshire agreed provision
- Parental preference
- Acceptance at resource base sign off/ Head of School/ Trustee
- Children will be in Reception or KS1 on entry
- Children who may benefit from some exposure to mainstream classes

Who runs the resource base?

The Resource Base is staffed and managed by the Resource Base Team which works across the schools as a Trust-wide group. The Resource Base Team works closely with Castle Mead School staff to manage children's integration into the main school.

Resource Base Team

- Chief Executive Officer – Lyssy Bolton
- Headteacher – Emma Larkham
- Head of Resource Base – Gaby Simons
- Assistant Head – Inclusion – Heather Gilbert
- Bats 1 Teacher – Rachel Brotherton
- Bats 2 Teacher – Emma Attree
- Bats 3 Teacher – Susie Mills
- Parent Support Advisors = Kate Mortimer

Additional staff as a result of the proposal

- 4 x resource base TAs

This also includes other staff across the Trust to support approaches and processes as are relevant and appropriate.

Other Professionals

The Resource Base also has other visiting school support professionals who work with children in a range of ways, which include both direct and indirect input. This enables targets to be completed throughout the school day to support children's access to their education.

- Speech and Language Therapists (SALT)
- Occupational Therapists (OT)
- Educational Psychologists
- Clinical Psychologists
- Disability nursing team
- Music Therapy

The Role of Castle Mead Staff with the Resource Base

The aim of the resource base is to provide a specialist provision which is well supported and staffed but will only thrive with support and where appropriate integration with the wider Castle Mead School Team. Over the last year this has evolved and developed to respond to the individual children and their needs and this will continue to be the approach used. The resource base is embraced and engaged with as an integrated part of the school and where appropriate staff across the resource base and the main school support each other to learn and develop and all children are benefitting from this collective interchange.

What about children at Castle Mead School who would benefit from specialist teaching?

Children at Castle Mead School will not automatically be able to attend the Resource Base as this is not the named provision on their EHCP. The usual method of EHCP admissions must be followed, and therefore all requests for places at the Resource Base must go through the child's SEND Lead Worker during their Annual Review.

All decisions about Resource Base places are made by the Local Authority and school staff do not have any influence over this. By attending Castle Mead School it does not increase the chance of getting a place in the Resource Base. Only when the Resource Base is named as the child's provision in their EHCP, will they be able to have a place in the Resource Base, and not beforehand.

However, as part of our collaborative working, Bats 1, 2 & 3 class staff and Castle Mead School staff do share their expertise and knowledge with all staff across the schools. This is to continually review and improve our high-quality inclusive teaching that all children will benefit from.

If/ when children who are at the Resource Base begin to thrive beyond the resource base and show the ability to succeed long term in mainstream school, this would be discussed and agreed as part of the annual review process where the appropriate setting would be identified. This would not necessarily be the school where the base is sited as would need to consider space, parental choice, and proximity to home.

Teaching and Curriculum

As the provision is for pupils who have social, communication needs which often includes a diagnosis of Autism, the Resource Base is designed to provide a structured environment that is welcoming and inclusive. The staff team strive to give the pupils the maximum level of independence that they can achieve.

All pupils will have access to a broad and balanced curriculum which includes the core subjects (Maths, English and Science) and the Foundation subjects (all other subjects). These are taught in Otters' classroom, by their teacher.

The method of teaching within the Resource Base is adaptive and responsive to need building in both specialist and more traditional approaches to teaching and learning engagement. The children are taught from the Primary National Curriculum, using a differentiated approach adapted to the individual needs. Children will be typically working between the N1-YR range.

Lessons tend to be shorter than in the main school with a focus on early skills and engagement. Regular learning breaks are given to the children with extra playtimes outside. Playtimes and lunchtimes are also seen as learning opportunities for the children to develop their social communication skills and are supported by their teachers and TAs to do this.

Methods of Teaching in the Resource Base

In the Resource Base staff use a range of methods as appropriate to an ASC friendly environment. These are likely to include but will not be limited to:

Attention Autism - Attention Autism is a learning approach that aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication skills in children with autism through the use of visually based and highly motivating activities. The approach was developed by speech and language therapist, Gina Davies. In Otters' class, we use this approach to teach specific objectives in literacy and maths.

TEACCH Method– (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children) This method promotes having a structured learning environment that encourages visual based engagement and communication. This includes well-considered physical boundaries in the learning space, having a consistent schedule, a work system which establishes expectations and independence, consistency, and visual based cues or reminders.

PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) – This is where children and adults can use pictures and visual supports to communicate their wants/ needs. Even if children have verbal skills, this can help them to communicate more clearly with others, and help them to understand instructions and conversations.

Makaton – Uses signs and symbols to help people communicate. This is similar to sign language but simpler and child friendly.

Back-Chaining – this refers to breaking down a task and teaching the child it in reverse order. For example, they would start by doing the very last part of the task/ lesson to give them a sense of accomplishment. They would then gradually build this up to take on more responsibility/ independence until they can do most or all the task themselves.

Positive Behaviour Support - Positive behaviour support (PBS) is 'a person-centred framework for providing long-term support to people with a learning disability, and/or autism, who have, or may be at risk of developing, behaviours that challenge. It is a blend of person-centred values and behavioural science and uses evidence to inform decision-making.

Break and Lunchtimes

Again, the approach is dependent on the needs of individual children but where this is appropriate and possible, they join in opportunities at playtimes and lunchtimes, as and when this is right for each child. There is however separate space and supervision as well.

Additional playground resources and equipment are provided for children in the resource base which will also be made available to Wyndham Park children if and where these are appropriate/ beneficial.

Access to mainstream lessons

The school is committed to adopting an inclusive approach in all aspects of its work. We believe that, where it is suitable for an individual learner in the Resource Base, access to mainstream classes can help to promote independence and social awareness. This takes several forms: shared playtimes, lunchtimes, assemblies, and trips, as well as participation in selected mainstream lesson, performances, and clubs. All learners will have the opportunity to be included in this way across the school. The Wyndham Park Resource base is part of the main school building, not set apart from it, and we seek to ensure that our practice reflects that.

Assessment

Regular teacher assessments take place, which allow for close monitoring of the pupils' academic progress, social and personal development. These will be undertaken by the Otters' class teacher.

How do we know this is successful?

- All children feel a sense of belonging in our school community
- All children achieve strong academic and social success relative to their starting points
- Collaborative planning and learning enhance the skills of staff in both settings
- Staff confidence is increased – both for Wyndham Park staff in supporting pupils with SEN and for Otters' class staff in developing curriculums for pupils who can access mainstream provisions.
- Everyone practices respect, tolerance and understanding.
- There is a greater awareness and understanding of ASC needs amongst the community and use of high-quality practice in supporting this
- Staff training opportunities are increased and are impactful in both settings
- Staff, pupils, and parents feel a shared sense of purpose and inclusivity