

Orchard Mead Academy

Consultation on the expansion of the DSP (Designated Specialist Provision)

April 2022

Orchard Mead Academy DSP capacity – proposed increase

The Designated Specialist Provision (DSP) at Orchard Mead was set up in September 2020 to cater for students with an Education, Health and Care Plan detailing a primary need of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

The original intention for the DSP was to cater for 12 students across Key Stages 3 and 4. Permission was given by the DfE for a DSP for five students because the school was classed as vulnerable. The school was a sponsored academy which had joined The Mead Educational Trust (TMET) in September 2017 after being graded as Inadequate in its 2016 Ofsted inspection. At the time of applying to open the DSP, the school had not had an Ofsted inspection since joining TMET.

The school was inspected by Ofsted in February 2022 and was judged to be Good. Following this, TMET is submitting an application to the DfE to increase the DSP capacity from five to 12 students.

TMET is required to consult on the proposed expansion of the DSP.

Context

Pressures for special school places continues to rise across the country. Within Leicester City, the number of pupils with an education, health and care plan (EHCP) continues to rise steadily, particularly for children and young people with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and social emotional and mental health needs.

Special Schools in Leicester are at maximum capacity and there is currently a shortage of specialist places. The average cost of placing children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in an out of city placement is £45k per place per year. This is in contrast to the current average £24.6k per place which can be provided in a local school. Therefore, investment to expand the schools and increase special provision will not only have a positive effect on the lives of children within the city, and the distance they travel to school, but will also positively reduce placement costs.

Response to meet SEND demand

Pupils with SEND have a broad range of needs that are not always aligned with a particular type of school structure. Therefore, the Leicester City Local Authority (LA) needs to ensure there is a spectrum of provision across the City that effectively meets a diverse range of SEND needs. The LA has undertaken in depth analysis to look at the increasing profile of need across the city and has identified that one of the solutions is to expand the level of Designated Specialist Provision (DSP).

Designated Special Provision (DSP)

DSP is a model for offering a co-located specialist facility in a mainstream school which allows pupils with SEND who have needs which would normally be beyond the capacity of the mainstream environment to have those needs met whilst still being able to access a mainstream curriculum.

The intention of a DSP is that pupils will still access a significant amount of mainstream lessons but will also have the support of the DSP for certain aspects of their learning and for other needs. Many

children with special needs can be successfully included into a mainstream school. Maintaining a place in a mainstream setting gives access to a broader curriculum for pupils with SEND and attainment is typically higher for pupils where this is an option. In addition, educating pupils with SEND alongside their peers in mainstream has significant benefits both for the pupils with SEND, who have access to the wider social life of the school, but also for the wider school community, as it creates a more diverse and inclusive culture.

Special Schools provide a significant degree of specialism and intensity of provision to pupils with very high SEND. DSPs provide an environment for pupils with SEND but for whom the combination of specialist support and access to the mainstream school provision is appropriate.

Local Authority approach

Over the last few years, the LA has encouraged Leicester schools to consider the creation of DSPs, each one specialising in a particular aspect of SEND. These units allow children to still be in a mainstream setting and can avoid the need to travel considerable distances to school. The Mead Educational Trust (TMET) set up a DSP at Orchard Mead Academy in 2020 and DSPs at Kestrel and Willowbrook Mead Primary Academies in 2021. The Trust has a long-standing DSP at Thurnby Mead Primary Academy.

Orchard Mead Academy DSP

The Orchard Mead Academy DSP is a specially adapted building environment with one classroom, an intervention space and access to a communal social area.

The DSP is led by an individual with experience as an SEMH school assistant principal and is supported by a specialist teacher and two HLTAs trained in emotional literacy and specialist intervention support. In addition, there is a dedicated mental health practitioner and a psychotherapist providing therapeutic support. This support concentrates on specific pupil needs and wider school staff training. If students have other needs then the relevant external agency will support.

The aims and purpose of the Orchard Mead SEMH DSP are to:

- Provide students with specialist teaching targeted at those with SEMH.
- Provide a structured, supportive environment where students can feel secure, develop confidence and achieve their full potential.
- Provide a broad, balanced and differentiated curriculum using a wide range of teaching methods and styles to meet the needs of individual students.
- Provide opportunities for specific interventions, for example to develop independence and social skills.
- Enable students to be included in mainstream lessons and extra curricular activities whenever this is appropriate.
- Work in close partnership with parents/carers, outside agencies and the students.

Benefits to the school

Orchard Mead Academy has a higher than national average number of children with EHCPs and a diagnosis of SEMH. By introducing this DSP provision, we have brought SEMH experts into the school. We have seen an increase in the quality of provision for all students at Orchard Mead Academy due to the ability to meet need better for some key students as well as sharing good practice across the school.

FAQs

How do the DSP admissions work? These go through the City Council Pupil Allocation Panel so are open to pupils from all over the City (and not just from the school where the DSP is located and not just from The Mead Educational Trust).

How is the DSP funded? The LA provides the funds for the development of the unit and for the pupil places. So no funding is diverted from the school's budget.

Will staff be diverted from the main school to work in the DSP? No. Additional staff are recruited for the DSP.

Who has oversight of the DSP? Within The Mead Educational Trust, the Orchard Mead Academy Executive Principal and the Trust Deputy Director of Education. Both have considerable SEND experience in Special Schools and DSPs respectively. The LA also has oversight of the unit.

Where is the DSP? It is in a separate building on the Orchard Mead Academy site that was previously the school caretaker's house. The building has been adapted to meet the needs of the DSP pupils.