

**Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy**  
**Consultation on the expansion of DSP (Designated Specialist Provision)**  
**May to June 2023**

**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 social emotional and mental health (SEMH) 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). These units allow children to still be in a mainstream setting and can avoid the need to travel considerable distances to school.

Over the last few years, the LA has encouraged Leicester schools to consider the creation of DSPs (and expansion of existing DSPs).

The Mead Educational Trust (TMET) currently has four DSPs:

- a long-standing DSP at Thurnby Mead Primary Academy with 15 places for children in Key Stages 1 and 2 with speech, language and communication needs (with application currently in process to increase this to 20 places);
- a DSP set up in 2021 at Kestrel Mead Primary Academy with 8 places for children in Key Stage 1 with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) needs (with application currently in process to increase this to 10 places);
- a DSP set up in 2021 at Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy with 10 places for children in Key Stage 2 with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs; and
- a DSP set up in 2021 at Orchard Mead Academy with 12 places for children in Key Stages 3 and 4 with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.

**Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy DSP capacity – proposed increase in number and age range**

The DSP at Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy currently has 10 places for children in Key Stage 2 with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs. Due to demand for places, it is proposed to increase capacity to 12 places.

In operating the DSP from 2021, the Local Authority has placed a number of Key Stage 1 children. Therefore, the proposal is to expand the age range from Key Stage 2 to Key Stages 1 and 2.

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

## **Background**

### **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 can still access some 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 for whom the combination of specialist support and access to the mainstream school provision is appropriate.

### **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 school 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.