

Rushey Mead Academy
Proposal to create a DSP (Designated Specialist Provision)
Consultation 10 April to 1 May 2024

Proposed Rushey Mead Academy DSP

The DSP will cater for up to 16 students across Key Stages 3 and 4. All of these students will have an Education, Health and Care Plan detailing a primary need of Communication and Interaction.

The DSP will be an allocated space within the mainstream setting with one classroom, an intervention space and access to a communal social area.

The DSP will be led by a highly trained teacher with experience in supporting students with Communication and Interaction needs and will be supported by two HLTAs (higher level teaching assistants) trained in social communication interventions and other interventions to support those with Autism. The Local Authority will provide additional support from the LCI Team, SEMH Team and Educational Psychology service.

The aims and purpose of the Rushey Mead DSP are to:

- Provide students with specialist teaching targeted at those with Communication and Interaction needs.
- Provide a structured, supportive environment where students can feel secure, develop confidence and achieve their full potential.
- Provide opportunities for students to develop their social, communication and interaction skills and emotional development.
- 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.

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 communication and interaction 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 the expansion of existing DSPs).

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

- A long-standing DSP at Thurnby Mead Primary Academy with 20 places for children in Key Stages 1 and 2 with speech, language and communication needs and/or with hearing impairment.
- A DSP set up in 2021 at Kestrel Mead Primary Academy with 10 places for children in Key Stage 1 with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) needs.
- A DSP set up in 2021 at Willowbrook Mead Primary Academy with 12 places for children in Key Stage 2 with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs.
- 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.

Further information on DSPs

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. No funding is diverted from the school's budget to set up and run the DSP.

Will staff be diverted from the main school to work in the DSP?

No. Additional staff are recruited for the DSP.

Who will have oversight of the DSP?

Within The Mead Educational Trust, the school Principal and the Trust Director of Education with a focus on SEND and inclusion. The latter has considerable experience in Special Schools and DSPs. The LA will also have oversight of the unit and conducts quality assurance checks on all DSPs in the city.