



Proposal to increase the number of places at Alderman Knight Special School, Tewkesbury to 208 pupils and to alter the age range from 4 -19 years to 7 – 19 years with effect from September 2020

Gloucestershire County Council and the governors of Alderman Knight Community Special School continue to work together to meet the needs of children and young people in Gloucestershire with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Together we want to make sure we have the right number of special school places in the right places in order to give every child the high quality education they deserve.

The purpose of this document is to provide you with some background information about the proposals to:

- **increase the number of places at Alderman Knight Special School**
- **alter the age range from 4 -19 years to 7 – 19 years**

This background information document has been sent to the parents of every child currently registered at the school as well as to other stakeholders we think are likely to be interested in this proposal, including the Parent Carer Forum who are the strategic partner of the County Council representing parent carer views.

There is a statutory four week period for interested parties to make any comments or representations on this proposal, which will be taken in to account before deciding whether to proceed with the proposals. Details of where to send any comments or representations are given at the end of the document.

Background

There is a recognised need to increase the number of special school places available within Gloucestershire. This is as a result of an overall increase in population and an increase in the number of children and young people requiring a special school place. This increase in demand is in line with national trends.

When there are not enough special school places available this can result in children and young people travelling out of area, often some distance from home, in order to receive the specialist provision they require. An important element of Gloucestershire's High Needs Strategy is to increase the number of special school places. When the High Needs Strategy was consulted on there was broad support to the principle of increasing the number of special school places locally (96% of respondents agreed). Consultation with schools, parent carer forums and partner agencies as well as the wider public on the SEND Commissioning Strategy document took place last year and there continues to be support for further developing local provision as an alternative to making placements out of area.

The current situation at Alderman Knight Community Special School

Alderman Knight School in Tewkesbury is a local authority maintained community special school registered to offer education for children and young people aged 4-19 years whose **primary** special needs have been identified as:

- Communication and Interaction
- Cognition and Learning

Whilst the children and young people are typically working within the Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) range (and above) pupils may also have associated complex learning difficulties and disabilities (i.e. they may have conditions that overlap and interlock, e.g. mental health, social and emotional, physical, medical, sensory, communication & interaction).

All of the pupils have an Education Health Care Plan in recognition of their assessed complex Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

It is a popular school which was judged 'Outstanding' when last inspected by Ofsted in January 2019. The majority of the children who attend live in Gloucestershire but, owing to its location, there are some children and young people who attend from Worcestershire. There are currently 173 pupils registered at the school, with 178 expected for September 2020.

There is a greater demand for places in the upper age range of the school. The school recently expanded to enable it to accommodate Post 16 students. The demand for places in

the upper age ranges continues. In September, as all children move up a year group, there will not be any children in the Reception and Key Stage 1 age phase (Years 1 and 2).

Governors at the school support the proposal for an overall increase in the number of pupils so that even more Gloucestershire children can benefit from the outstanding education available. In addition, they believe that altering the age range will allow them to focus on the age ranges where there is the greatest level of demand.

Proposal to increase the number of places at Alderman Knight Special School to 208 pupils

The proposal to increase the overall number of places to 208 allows the school to accommodate a further 30 children from September 2020. This means another three classes in time. It is not proposed that the extra 30 pupils will all join the school at the same time, but allows the school to go up to 208. We envisage up to 20 additional pupils joining during the academic year 2020-21 and then a further ten being able to join the school during the academic year 2021-22. Children join the school throughout the year.

Gloucestershire County Council will be providing the school with additional accommodation in time for the increase in places. By September 2021 it is envisaged that Phase 2 of the new building will be completed, which adds additional impressive and purpose built accommodation to the new Post 16 building. The school is working closely with the council and the architects on the internal layout of this new building as well as the temporary accommodation that will be needed for September 2020 and until the new build is complete.

The council will provide the school with the additional funding for increased staffing to support the additional pupils so the level and quality of support available to pupils already at the school is not affected. Class sizes will not increase as a result of the overall increase in numbers.

Proposal to alter the age range from 4 -19 years to 7 - 19 years with effect from September 2020

Increasingly, the type of children Alderman Knight School caters for, are successfully included at their local mainstream school in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. Those children who do require special school places in these younger year groups typically have more complex needs than Alderman Knight School is commissioned to accommodate.

Depending on where they live, children in this age range typically attend:

- The Milestone School in Gloucester (2-16 yrs)
- Bettridge School in Cheltenham (2-19 yrs)
- The Shrubberies School in Stonehouse (2-19 yrs)
- Paternoster School in Cirencester (2-17 yrs)
- The Heart of the Forest Community Special School (3-19 yrs)
- The Battledown Centre for Children and Families in Cheltenham (2-7yrs)

These schools have commissioning briefs that cover more complex needs which include sensory and physical needs, social emotional and mental health needs as well as communication and interaction and a full range of cognition and learning difficulties.

Over time fewer children in these younger year groups have been placed at the school and from September 2020, as children move up in to the next year group, there will not be any children in Reception, Yr 1 or Yr2.

Altering the age range at Alderman Knight School from 4-19 to 7-19 does not reduce the number of special school places available in the county for these younger age children. There are plans to increase the number of places from September 2021 at The Battledown Centre for Children and Families in Cheltenham, which focuses more specifically on children of this age and is more centrally located within the county. This will also provide the very small numbers of children in this age range who are sometimes placed at Alderman Knight School with a larger peer group of children of the same age.

The proposal to alter the age range of the school has the full support of the Alderman Knight School governing body as it will enable the school to focus even more closely on securing the very best outcomes for those pupils where there is the greatest level of demand i.e. the upper age ranges.

What happens next?

A statutory notice has been published (in accordance with section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013) to formally set out the proposal to make these changes to the school. We have sent a copy of this to the parents of every child registered at the school, along with a copy of this background information document.

Copies of the statutory notice can be obtained from the Gloucestershire County Council website at:

<https://www.gloucestershire.gov.uk/education-and-learning/school-planning-and-projects/gloucestershire-school-projects/>

or by contacting AKSproposals@gloucestershire.gov.uk A four week period follows from the publication of the statutory notice for interested parties to comment or make representations regarding the proposals. A final decision will be made at the end of this four week period on the implementation of these proposals.

Any comments or representations can be sent by e-mail to the dedicated e-mail address AKSproposals@gloucestershire.gov.uk or by post to Alderman Knight School Proposals, FREEPOST NAT10062, Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucester GL1 2TP. These should be received no later than **9 July 2020**.

Any parents of children currently registered at Alderman Knight School who wish to discuss this in more detail are warmly invited to contact Clare Steel, Headteacher at Alderman Knight School.



Charlotte Jones
Acting Director of Education
Gloucestershire County Council

11 June 2020



Clare Steel
Headteacher
Alderman Knight School

11 June 2020