

PROPOSAL TO INCREASE PUPIL NUMBERS AT THE CEDAR SCHOOL & THE POLYGON SCHOOL

Summary of issues raised during consultation and response made by SEND Service, SCC

From the Southampton Parent Carer Forum

Pupil to staff ratio if increase goes ahead, particularly with medically vulnerable children, can you confirm exact pupil to staff ratio if this goes ahead?

Any increase in pupil numbers will be matched with an increase in funding to support additional staffing. The level of funding is based on need with some pupils attracting a higher level of funding than others. The pupil to staff ratio is determined by the Headteacher of the school and is based upon the needs of the pupils at any one time.

Will this have a negative effect on potentially reduced days offered for existing pupils due to more pupils being offered a place during COVID-19?

The increase in the published admission number will, if approved, come into effect in January 2021. However this is the published number and not the actual number on roll. The published admission number is being increased in anticipation of an increase in demand over the next few years. It will therefore not have any effect on the days offered as a result of COVID-19. We are of course hoping that all pupils will be returning to school in September full time.

It feels a little rushed, but that could be because of the developing situation?

As above increasing the published admission number is in preparation for an anticipated increase in demand over the next few years. The numbers of children in the Cedar School and the Polygon school are already above the existing published admission number due to demand for places. This proposal is confirming that increase and proving some leeway for other pupils to be admitted in the future.

How will this effect decisions made around families requesting out of city placements?

We are continually looking to increase the offer within the city so that parents feel confident in placing their child within a local school. There will always be some children who due to their complexity and the bespoke nature of their needs will require an out of city placement. This proposal will not affect that. For those pupils whose needs could be met within the city this will always be our preferred option.

From a member of the Southampton Parent Carer Forum (SPCF) Steering Group

As part of spcf steering group I would just say the ratio of adult to child/young person should be considered especially with complexities of health or behaviours. Not sure how to put it as I know demand is becoming ever increasingly higher for special provision (Sen parent & previous Sen staff members) other than it wouldn't be helpful to 'bite off more than you can chew' as this could have possible consequences in all kinds of areas affecting children , their parents & school staff.

Thank you for your email and for sharing you concerns regarding adult to pupil ratios at special schools and the proposal to increase the numbers at Polygon and Cedar Schools.

The funding of special schools is based on the numbers of children within the school and the needs of each child. This means that any increase in numbers will equate to an increase in funding. This can be used to employ more staff thus maintaining the adult - pupil ratio. In addition increased funding can offer schools more flexibility and a better offer for the pupils.

I hope this has reassured you. The proposals have been taken forward with the support of both Headteachers who do not believe that these increases will have any material impact on the school's ability to meet the needs of existing or future pupils.

From Parent of child at Cedar School

I am a parent of one of the children at Cedar School. I have been informed that the PAN is due to go up at the school. My concern is that my child requires 1 to 1 attention constantly so if the staff numbers aren't going up, it will cause issues in caring for my child. My child cannot be left alone as he self-harms himself and the staff have to continuously think of ways to distract him. He requires close contact and attention. If the number of pupils goes up but the staff numbers remain the same then my son's care will be compromised. Therefore, I am extremely unhappy and concerned about the upcoming increase in PAN.

Thank you for your email and for sharing with us your concerns regarding the proposed increase in the pupil numbers at Cedar School.

I fully understand your concerns and would wish to reassure you that any increase in pupil numbers would be accompanied with a matched increase in funding for staffing. With regard to your particular situation, if your child has been assessed as needing 1:1 attention he will continue to receive that regardless of any increases in pupil numbers.

The Cedar School Governing Body, Headteacher and staff have supported this proposed increase based on the understanding that it will not impact on the current pupils.

I hope this has alleviated your concerns.

Thank you for your detailed response. It has reassured us and we hope this will be a positive move for the school.

From Secondary Headteacher

I think increasing numbers is needed for the city. I am conscious that the Polygon is a single-sexed boys SEMH special school, and the increase in SEMH EHCPs across the city are likely to include both girls and boys. A breakdown of the increase in EHCP by gender and type would confirm or deny my hypothesis on this. As such, increasing numbers to provide more choice to parents will not accomplish that for parents of girls with an EHCP for SEMH needs

Thank you for your response to the consultation on increasing the numbers at The Cedar School and The Polygon School. We are aware that we have a gap in our provision for girls and appreciate your point that this current proposal does nothing to address that or give parents a choice of local provision. This is included in the bigger plans to expand our special school offer. The increase proposed is only for 10 places which at this stage will be for boys as that is where we have the greatest need and pressure.

I will keep your feedback on file to be used to support our future planning of provision within the city.

From representative of UNISON

In the proposal for Cedar School regarding PAN numbers, you stated "It is believed that this will not cause any detrimental effect to any of the pupils or staff within the school ". What evidence is this assumption based on? Is it the same at Polygon? What provisions will be in place to accommodate extra pupils?

The statement regarding the effect on pupils and staff is based upon an assessment undertaken by the Headteacher in consultation with staff. The Cedar School is in a relatively new building which has been designed to provide ample space to support pupils with physical disabilities. As the number of pupils with physical disabilities is set to reduce this will support an increase in the number of pupils that can be accommodated. The Headteacher at The Polygon has similarly undertaken a risk assessment with her staff and Governors and is in full support of an increase to the published admission number. I hope this answers your query.

From representative of NEU

Many thanks for sending me the proposed plans for raising the PAN number for both Cedar and Polygon special schools. My first concern is that the PAN numbers for both schools was set for sound reasons, those being space available and staffing ratios. Increasing the admission numbers (albeit by a relatively small number) will put extra burdens on both these schools, and in particular, our teaching and support members, who we are trying to protect from increasing workload.

You point out, backed by the figures, that the number of pupils requiring special provision , is increasing year on year. This proposal would, apart from the reasons mentioned already, be a short term solution. What is needed is a longer term planning with probably extension building to these schools with additional staffing, or even provision of another purpose built specialist school as I am sure there are other children within mainstream who would benefit greatly from specialist provision.

Thank you for your email. With regards to staffing, each pupil comes with funding to support the appointment of additional staff. We do not expect the schools to accommodate these additional pupils with the same staffing levels.

As far as long term planning goes, this proposal is part of a comprehensive strategy to increase the provision for children and young people with SEND. This strategy includes:-

- Increasing inclusion in mainstream schools*
- Developing a more flexible offer to include mainstream+ packages of care*
- Increasing the number of resourced provisions within the city*
- Expanding and reconfiguring our special school provision including refurbishing and replacing some of our old school buildings to make them fit for purpose and building an additional secondary complex needs school, an additional secondary SEMH school and a specialist Post 16 College.*

I hope this answers your queries.