

**Hardwick Primary School
Bury St Edmunds**

**Statutory Proposal to close Speech and
Language Unit**

Full Proposal Document

1. LA details

Suffolk County Council Endeavour House
8 Russell Road Ipswich
IP1 2BX

Suffolk County Council is the Proposer.

2. School details

Hardwick Primary School Steward Road
Bury St Edmunds IP33 2PW

Hardwick Primary is a Suffolk County Council maintained school.

3. Description of alteration and evidence of demand

This proposal is to close the Speech and Language Unit (SLU) for Year 1 and Year 2 pupils at Hardwick Primary School on 31 August 2020.

There will be no alteration to the school's PAN.

4. Objectives and reasons

The number of children with a speech, language or communication need (SLCN) is growing in line with the overall rising numbers of children and young people with SEND.

In Suffolk, SLCN services have not been meeting existing demand and have been highly variable for children and young people, with many children getting little or no support to develop these important life skills, while a minority have a very comprehensive offer. These deficiencies were identified in the most recent Local Area inspection of SEND by Ofsted/Care Quality Commission in 2017.

In the light of this, a new service that integrates education, health and care was co-produced by practitioners and service users in the 18-month period from December 2017. This new approach, which was approved by Suffolk County Council's Cabinet in July 2019, offers an inclusive service where every child can have the necessary support to develop their speech, language and communication skills. The new system, which will be fully implemented by September 2020, includes early screening, speech and language support from skilled teachers for all children during their early years. Specialist teachers that work across the county will bring the necessary expertise into the child's mainstream school. There will be rapid and appropriate referral to clinical services for those with greater needs. There will continue to be specialist provision for those children and young people who have the highest level of SLCN.

As part of this overall proposal, Suffolk County Council has agreed to an initial commitment to purchase assessment materials for schools across the county to support

early identification of need; the establishment of an extended specialist outreach service to support children in mainstream schools with SLCN and to replace the current, very limited, Speech and Language Unit offer for children aged 5-7 years with a more comprehensive and extensive network of Specialist Education Units for Communication and Interaction that can offer places for children aged 4 to 16 years.

This will provide a more equitable and comprehensive service for all children with SLCN in Suffolk. It will bring about improvements in educational standards for those children, providing support for parents and families in their understanding of the offer and more

options to meet their children's needs closer to home. Vitrally, the new service will better meet rising demand in Suffolk.

5. The effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions within the area

The new service will bring significant benefits to schools and academies by providing a dedicated specialist SLCN outreach team which will work with pupils in their local schools whilst developing the skills of mainstream teachers in meeting SLCN needs. Across Suffolk, there will be a network of new specialist units offering education for pupils with the highest level of SLCN needs from Reception through to the end of Key Stage 4.

6. Project costs and an indication of how these will be met

There are no capital costs associated with the closure of the Speech and Language Unit at Hardwick Primary School. Long term value for money will be achieved by educating children with SLCN in local settings and reducing the need for costly travel and/or out of county placement.

7. Implementation date

It is intended to implement the proposal to close Hardwick Primary School's SLU on 31 August 2020.

From that date, all pupils will be supported through the specialist outreach service for speech and language and, where appropriate, within specialist units.

The Speech and Language Unit at Hardwick Primary School has been commissioned to provide places for pupils aged between 5 and 7 Years (Key Stage 1) who have been diagnosed as having a specific speech and language disorder. Currently 7 pupils in Year 1 attend the unit. Parents of children in Year 1 who accepted a place for their child for September 2019 did so in the knowledge that the place was for one academic year. All Year 1 Hardwick SLU pupils have now been assessed individually and it is considered that their needs can be met in their home school with specialist support. All Year 1 Hardwick SLU pupils will transition to their local mainstream school with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in place. Current Year 2 pupils will continue into Year 3 mainstream from September 2020 as part of the normal process. Transition work has already begun to prepare all of the children for a return to their mainstream school.

8. Consultation

In December 2017, representatives from the three Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), SCC's various Children's Services, Community Paediatric providers and the Suffolk Parent Carer Network (SPCN) established a working group which carried out a review of SLCN provision across education, health and care services and recommended

a new approach that could improve and future proof the service offer.

Once a new structure had been developed in outline, events were held for families whose children were currently attending the Speech and Language Units in September 2018 and an additional three wider workshops were held for anyone who had an interest in contributing to the work. Six workshops were held in total at this developmental stage to inform the shaping of the new structure. Suffolk Parent Carer Network (SPCN), helped us to reach the widest possible range of parents and carers as did our own specific invitations to families with children in SLUs and further promotion through GP surgeries and other education and health providers. The suggestions made were fed back to the steering group and following consideration, modifications were made to the new model.

A public consultation on the new model ran from 11th March to 22nd April 2019. The

'Speech, Learning and Communication Needs consultation booklet' was available to read online or download from the Suffolk County Council website. Relevant cabinet papers were also available to read online or download from the Suffolk County Council website. A booklet explaining the background to the consultation and the options being consulted on was published, as well as a 2-page "easy read" consultation version. Further background information was provided through web-based links. In addition, at the request of families from the Speech and Language Unit in Ipswich, further meetings were held to discuss the proposals with the Cabinet and Deputy Cabinet Member.

In total, 391 people responded via the online consultation. Two thirds were parents and carers and a third practitioners. In depth analysis of the consultation responses indicated that overall the new service model was widely supported. Respondents felt that the new service would address the majority of the concerns raised regarding the current offer and take account of matters such as access, training and waiting times.

The key area where concerns remained within the new model related to the development of the Specialist Pathway for Communication and Interaction, and specifically within this to the admission of children into Specialist Reception/Key Stage 1 units rather than into the current Speech and Language Units. Cabinet members listened carefully to these concerns and modified the proposals to respond to this feedback. The modifications the Cabinet Member made were that:

- a. Three of the eleven new specialist Reception/Key Stage 1 Specialist Units already approved for development would have a specialism in Communication and Interaction.
- b. The three current schools with Speech and Language Units would be offered the opportunity to become these new Reception/Key Stage 1 Units with a Communication and Interaction specialism.
- c. Children with the greatest SLCN need would be prioritised for admission to the Reception/Key Stage 1 Units with a specialism in Communication and Interaction. However, families wishing to keep their children in their local community and attend their most local specialist Reception/Key Stage 1 unit would be able to do so if they preferred.
- d. Admissions criteria relating to prioritising access to the three units were agreed and would be reviewed after the first year of operation.

9. Related proposals

There are no related proposals.

10. Procedure for making representations (support, objections and comments)

Any person may object to, express support for, or make comments on the proposals by writing to Hardwick Primary School Consultation, Schools Infrastructure Team, Children and Young People's Service, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich Suffolk IP1 2BX, or you can [email schools@suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:schools@suffolk.gov.uk), within 4 weeks of the publication of these proposals (**by 24 April 2020**).