

Proposal to increase the number of pupils at Wyre Forest Special School 2018

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Introduction

Worcestershire County Council, as the Local Authority responsible for education provision, has a statutory responsibility to make sure that there are sufficient places for all of the children in Worcestershire who wish to attend a taxpayer funded school to do so. Taxpayer funded schools are those which are maintained by the Local Authority or receive funding direct from the government, such as Academies and Free Schools. Ensuring that there are sufficient places is known as Basic Need.

Worcestershire County Council is proposing to make a significant change to Wyre Forest Special School under The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) regulations 2013. This statutory proposal document contains all the relevant information to allow interested parties to decide whether to support the proposed change. Worcestershire County Council must follow a statutory process for making prescribed alterations to schools. The publication of this statutory proposal and notices forms part of that process.

School Details

Address:	Wyre Forest, Habberley Road, Kidderminster, DY11 6FA
Status:	Community Special
Commissioned places:	230 (September 2017)

Description of Proposed Alteration

Wyre Forest Special School is commissioned for 230 full-time equivalent (fte) pupil places. This proposal is to increase the number of commissioned full-time equivalent places to 260 from September 2018, this will not involve a physical expansion of the current building, the pupils will be accommodated within the existing teaching spaces and appropriate support space.

Objectives

The objective of this proposal is to provide additional special school places in Worcestershire to manage demand. The additional places will be of good quality and in a school which is popular with parents. The additional places will improve educational outcomes for children that require special school places and who are currently in alternative education provision.

Educational Standards and Diversity of Provision

Wyre Forest Special School is graded as a good school by Ofsted. This proposal will increase the number of places available in good quality Special schools in Worcestershire.

Wyre Forest Special School is located in Kidderminster. The school is one of nine maintained Special Schools in Worcestershire, it has an age range of 3 – 19 years (Nursery to NCY 14). It is designated a generic special school categorisation, catering for a variety of needs (moderate learning difficulties (MLD), severe learning difficulties (SLD), and autism and PMLD. All pupils attending the school from Reception group will have an Education, Health and Care plan that identifies that they require special school education provision. Pupils attending the Special School Nursery may not have an EHC plan.

Evidence of Demand

The 2017 High Needs Commissioning Review (HNCR) and SEND Sufficiency report detailed a need for more special school places in Worcestershire. The SEND Team currently have a list of 121 pupils waiting for a special school place, most of whom are currently in Worcestershire mainstream schools or Alternative Provision. There is also an increased demand for specialist nursery provision. The Provision Planning team have also forecast an increased need for special school places based purely on demographic growth of 39 places (Reception – Year 14) for September 2018 and 54 places for September 2019. This does not take into account housing growth, any surplus needed or the pupils within other provision waiting for a special school places.

The Governing Body of Wyre Forest Special School has indicated that they wish to increase the number of pupils at the school to help meet demand for special school places and the County Council supports this aim.

Some of the children who require a place at Wyre Forest Special School in September 2018 are currently in mainstream schools but have been identified as part of their Education Health and Care plan assessments as requiring a special school place to meet their special educational needs. It is appropriate for these children to move from mainstream to specialist education provision in planned way, with transition support.

The table below shows the numbers of pupils on roll (including part time nursery pupils) each January at Wyre Forest School over the last 4 years:

School	2015	2016	2017	2018
Wyre Forest School	220	220	252	251

The following table details the full-time equivalent commissioned places each academic year:

School	Sept 2014- July 2015	Sept 2015- July 2016	Sept 2016 - July 2017	Sept 2017 - July 2018	Sept 2018 - July 2019
Wyre Forest School	226	226	230	230	260*

**proposed*

Commissioned places have to be agreed as part of the Education Funding Agency place funding return each November for the following September. The number on roll may therefore be greater than the FTE Commissioned places as not all pupils attend on a full time basis and places can be agreed and commissioned throughout the academic year.

School Size

School funding is largely driven by pupil numbers so the proposed increase in commissioned places at Wyre Forest Special School from 230 to 260 will improve the long term sustainability of the school. This proposed increase will not change the physical size of the school.

Proposed Admission Arrangements

No other changes are proposed in respect of the admission criteria for Wyre Forest School.

Equal Opportunity Issues

An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on this proposal to determine and quantify any positive or negative impact (positive and/or negative) on our staff, service users and Worcestershire residents. No negative impact was identified, positive impact was identified for some pupils currently waiting for special school places.

Community Cohesion

Pupils attending Wyre Forest travel mainly from the local area primarily between 0 to 5 miles from the school. The largest majority of pupils reside in the district of Wyre Forest but pupils also travel from all the other districts of Worcestershire (Wychavon, Redditch, Wyre Forest, Worcester and Malvern). A small number of pupils attending Wyre Forest School live outside of Worcestershire County Council, primarily Shropshire.

Demographic growth and recent housing growth has increased the number of children requiring a place in special schools in Worcestershire. This proposal will ensure that the school can continue to serve local families, keeping the school at the heart of the community.

Travel and Accessibility

As with any school expansion there are concerns about the impact of additional children on traffic congestion at the start and end of the school day. The school is proactive in encouraging parents and pupils to use sustainable methods of travel to school. It is anticipated that the majority of pupils will continue to receive transport assistance.

Project Costs and Capital Funding

The increase in pupil numbers from 230 for September 2017 to 260 places in September 2018 has been agreed by the school within the existing accommodation of the school. There is no capital funding required to deliver the increase in places.

The revenue funding will be found as part of the High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant. Each full time equivalent place will be funded at £10,000 plus the top up funding required for individual pupils (where appropriate) based on the High Needs bandings submitted by the school to the Local Authority. Some pupils may move from mainstream schools into these places, although this is unlikely to generate any savings.

School Premises and Playing Fields

Many regulations relating to school premises, including the level of playing field provision, have been dissolved or slimmed down by the Department for Education. Guidelines set out suggested areas for outdoor space but these are non-statutory. The County Council will make what it considers reasonable provision of outside space to support the learning and achievement needs of the children attending the school, taking account of site specific factors in each case.

Implementation

If approved, this proposal will be implemented by the County Council working in partnership with the Governing Body. The increase in FTE places will start from the September 2018 intake.

Procedure for responses

Anyone wishing to make a response to this proposal must write to:

Provision Planning Team

Ref: Wyre Forest Special School proposal 2018

Children, Families and Communities

PO Box 73

Worcester

WR5 2YA

Or e-mail to rkiernan@worcestershire.gov.uk

Responses must be received by **Tuesday 17th July 2018**.

Decision

Any comments on the proposal will be taken into account by the decision maker. If there are objections to the proposal then these will be considered on behalf of the County Council by the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Education and Skills before a final decision is made on whether to proceed with the proposal. If there are no objections to this proposal, the final decision will be made by the Director of Children's Families and Communities.

The final decision must be made within a period of two months from 17th July 2018, however the aim is for a decision to be made before the school summer holidays begin.