

Proposal to make a change in provision at: Bidwell Brook School, Dartington

School and LA details

Devon County Council, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QD

Bidwell Brook School
Shinner's Bridge
Dartington
Totnes
Devon, TQ9 6JU

Description of alterations

It is proposed to increase places at Bidwell Brook School from 95 to 110 from September 2017. Bidwell Brook School will continue to cater for children aged 3-19 with Severe Learning Difficulties, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties and Complex Needs.

Evidence of demand

The number of places available needs to be increased to meet demand and is in line with the planning and commissioning of Special Needs provision and Devon's Local Offer.

Objectives:

This provision would fill a gap in provision available and provide parents with additional choice.

Education standards and curriculum

The school aim to create a stimulating and caring educational environment within the security of small teaching groups. Students have access to the national curriculum, suitably adapted to ensure that acquisition of skills and knowledge is relevant to their specific needs and abilities.

Bidwell Brook School was inspected by Ofsted in January 2014 and is a Good school. Pupils of all abilities make good and sustained progress from when they start school through to Year 11. Teachers are very effective in supporting pupils so that they sustain their good progress as they move through the school. Pupils benefit from a wide range of learning, focusing on English, mathematics and communication. There is also good use of specialist facilities in subjects such as art, music and food technology. The Ofsted report is available via: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Improvement in standards, quality and range of educational provision

The school is committed to raising educational standards for each student and ensuring that every child will be the best that they can be. Whatever the level of learning difficulties faced by individual pupils, work is pitched at the right level to enable pupils to make good progress.

The effect on other Schools, Academies and educational institutions in the area:

The increase in places would not have a negative effect on other schools and would support them by providing specialist provision for children who are not managing or progressing in a mainstream setting.

Project Costs

Bidwell Brook School has sufficient accommodation to accommodate higher numbers without the requirement for additional capital or planning consent.

Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation:

The proposals, if approved, will be implemented from September 2017.

Effect on existing pupils

In planning and commissioning SEND provision the proposals are in line with Devon's Local Offer to ensure that children and young people with SEND should have the expectation to be part of their local community. Our multi-agency approach has a strong focus on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND as well as involving them and their families in developing provision. The provision takes into account the demand for places at Bidwell Brook School and will provide access to specialist support for more pupils.

Consultation

The consultation period was from 1 March to 29 March 2017. One response has been received.

The response was from a member of staff at Bidwell Brook School who understands and supports the need for more special school places in the area. However, the response outlines that the school building was built for 70 students and that the school currently have over 100 pupils on roll and with the proposed increase to 110 places, could actually end up having 121 students on roll. The teacher feels that students are being impacted by the numbers in the classrooms. Many of the students need quiet spaces to work alone or to reduce their sensory input and teachers are struggling to find places to accommodate this. The school have outdoor learning spaces and staff are inventive as to how all the spaces can be utilised but there are not enough indoor spaces to give students quiet and calm to learn. This is for students who need to be warm and outdoor learning is not a year round solution to this. The respondee enquires as to the use of the temporary classrooms currently being used by Dartington Primary School and whether once Dartington Primary School have their new school building, whether the temporary classrooms could be moved to the Bidwell Brook School site. Four Teaching Assistants and 1 Teacher to a class are fully stretched through the working day to meet the teaching, learning, personal hygiene, therapy and social needs of our students. The respondee states that at the moment, as teachers, we feel we are failing our students because we do not have the space or time to give the students the learning they deserve and should expect.

The school have responded that, in the past, Bidwell Brook has been fortunate to have small class sizes and large classrooms. Unfortunately, with the current funding crisis and escalating costs, there is an expectation that we work differently. Slightly larger classes, higher expectations and complex pupils, all mean that our schools are busy, vibrant places. Some teachers who have been used to more generous space may find this a difficult shift to make. Bidwell Brook has made very rapid progress over the past 4 years and is now a very good school, on the verge of being outstanding. It is therefore a busy, challenging place to work. It is also increasingly in demand due to reputation and the rapidly growing community.

The pupil increase will initially be small in actual terms as the school is already over-numbers, with 105 pupils attending. The extra revenue from additional pupils as they arrive, will allow us to employ more staff, so individual classes will benefit from better staffing ratios due to the economy of scale.

The mobile classrooms on site at Dartington Primary School are only leased and are scheduled to be returned to Portakabin.

Response to Brief Notice

You can object to or comment on the proposals by:

Emailing: schoolconsultations@devon.gov.uk

Writing to: Strategic Planning Children's Services, Room AB2, Devon County Council, County Hall, Topsham Road, Exeter, EX2 4QD.

by the closing date of 5pm on 17 May 2017.