

St. Joseph's Catholic College

Consultation on the proposed opening of an SEN Unit for complex behavioural, emotional, social, physical and learning difficulties at St Joseph's Catholic College (St Joseph's)

Key information

- **How long is the consultation open for?**

The consultation starts formally on 9 March 2022 and will close on 6 April 2022.

- **How do I make my views known?**

There are a number of options available to you which are set out at the end of this document.

- **How do I find out more?**

Please come along to our consultation evening on Tuesday 15 March at 5.30pm in the Main Hall. Alternatively, please contact us at msmith@stjosephscollege.net or hpeace@stjosephscollege.net and we would be pleased to discuss any particular questions / concerns that you might have.

Introduction

The Governors are considering whether or not to open an SEN Unit in September 2022 to support students with complex behavioural, emotional, social, physical and learning difficulties.

Before making a decision as to whether or not to proceed, the Governors are keen to hear all of your views on the proposal. This document provides further information on the proposal to help you respond to the consultation.

What is the proposal?

We are exploring whether to formally open the SEN Unit at the St Joseph's site.

If the Governing Body decides to go ahead with the proposal, the SEN Unit would open in September 2022.

The SEN Unit would be for up to 10 additional pupils with complex behavioural, emotional, social, physical and learning difficulties in each of years 7 to 11. All of these pupils would have Education, Health and Care Plans (**EHCPs**) and would therefore be admitted to St Joseph's under separate statutory SEN processes, rather than under the determined admission arrangements for St Joseph's.

Pupils in SEN Units spend more than 50% of their learning being taught within the SEN Unit and the remainder of time being taught within mainstream classes (e.g. for physical education classes).

If the SEN Unit opens, the capacity for years 7 to 11 will be increased from 1,340 to 1,390.

Why is St Joseph's considering opening the SEN Unit?

St Joseph's is committed to supporting students with SEND and has identified with the Council that there are a number of pupils in the area who would benefit from intervention best structured through a designated SEN Unit at St Joseph's.

During Summer 2020, the Council funded some works within St Joseph's to enable the set-up of an SEN Unit, enabling St Joseph's to take up to 10 pupils per year across all secondary years.

Will all children with an EHCP at St Joseph's be placed in the SEN Unit once it opens?

No they won't - there will still be children with an EHCP in mainstream classes at St Joseph's.

Not all pupils with EHCPs need to be placed in a SEN Unit, or indeed an SRP (specialist resource provision) Unit. Many pupils with EHCPs are placed in mainstream classes with differentiated learning, and some require special school placements. This is entirely down to the specific needs of the pupil concerned.

What would be the benefits of opening the SEN Unit?

We are exploring this option as we think that it will:

- enable us to contribute more formally to the provision of SEND education in a town where there are currently limited places for pupils with SEND,
- ensure that our support for these pupils is structured in the best way possible, largely in specifically designated facilities, to enable them to best access mainstream education,
- give more pupils with complex needs the opportunity to continue their education within a mainstream school as a stepping stone to both mainstream further and higher education and the workplace, and
- give our existing and future mainstream pupils the opportunity to work more closely with pupils with complex needs to help them understand and support some of the challenges faced by their peers in society.

Are there any disadvantages of opening the SEN Unit?

Ultimately, we consider that the opening of an SEN Unit does not carry any significant disadvantages but we appreciate that there might be some perceived disadvantages which we consider below in more detail.

Will this change impact admissions (will it remove mainstream places)?

Quite simply, no. The SEN Unit is designated for 10 additional pupils per year across years 7 to 11, over and above St Joseph's determined PAN for year 7. As stated above, the Council has funded building works to increase the physical capacity of St Joseph's to accommodate the additional pupils and their needs.

For clarification only, we will be including a statement within St Joseph's admission arrangements along the following lines:

"As from September 2022, St Joseph's operates an SEN Unit for behavioural, emotional, social, physical and learning difficulties for up to 10 pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and the admission of these pupils is dealt with in accordance with the statutory processes set out in the SEND Code of Practice, not under these admission arrangements. These 10 places will be across Year 7 to 11 and are additional to the PAN stated above"

Will this change result in teachers being reallocated to the SEN Unit from mainstream classes?

No, separate dedicated staff have been and will be employed into the SEN Unit.

Will funding allocated to mainstream education be used to fund the SEN Unit?

No. Each pupil at St Joseph's is allocated funding directly from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). For pupils with EHCPs who will attend the SEN Unit, 'top-up' / 'high needs' funding will be provided directly from the 'commissioner' of the place, i.e. the Council, and this enables us to provide the additional resource required for that pupil.

What about the status quo?

Without opening the SEN Unit, the Council is likely to continue to place pupils with complex behavioural, emotional, social, physical and learning difficulties at St Joseph's (which is how our current SEND pupils with EHCPs are with us). That would mean that 'top-up' / 'high needs' funding would be provided by the Council but pupils would need to be educated within mainstream classes without having a designated unit / base from which they will be taught for the majority of the time.

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What are the legal steps required for the SEN Unit to open?

Once the consultation has finished, the Governing Body will decide whether to formally apply to the Regional School Commissioner and their Advisory Board for consent to open the SEN Unit. The Advisory Board will make a decision based on the Governing Body's business case / application and if it is approved, our solicitors will engage with the ESFA to amend our funding agreement. The funding agreement will be amended to reflect the characteristics of the SEN Unit as follows:

- 10 places per year
- Years 7 to 11
- complex behavioural, emotional, social, physical and learning difficulties.

What about the Governing Body's obligations under the Equality Act 2010?

In considering this proposal, the Governing Body is mindful of its duty to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010,
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it, and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

The relevant protected characteristics are:

- a) age;
- b) disability;
- c) gender re-assignment;
- d) pregnancy and maternity;
- e) race;
- f) religion or belief;
- g) sex; and
- h) sexual orientation.

The Governing Body will be carrying out its own assessment of any such impact on the protected characteristics of a decision to move forward with opening the SEN Unit, but if there is anything related to this which you would like to draw to the Governing Body's attention, please get in touch.

How will the consultation impact on the Governors' decision?

The Governors will not take a final decision on the question until the consultation process has been completed. You have the option of providing your comments in writing (in whatever format you would prefer) or by coming to one of our consultation sessions. You also have the option of making an appointment to meet with Madison Smith or Helen Peace if you would like to discuss the proposal further. The Governors will then consider any comments / representations received before making a final decision.

How do I respond to this engagement?

There are a number of options open to you:

- send any comments by email to msmith@stjosephscollege.net or hpeace@stjosephscollege.net with the heading "SEN Unit"
- deliver any hand written comments to the school reception marked "FOA M Smith - SEN Unit"
- attend our consultation evening on Tuesday 15 March in the Main Hall.

Please respond by 6 April 2022 in order that the Governing Body will have the opportunity to take your response into account when making its decision.