

Manchester City Council
Publication of statutory notice and proposal to close Buglawton Hall Special School

Introduction

On 8th March 2017, Manchester City Council's Executive approved a proposal to begin a Stage 1 informal consultation on the closure of Buglawton Hall Residential Special School, based in Congleton, Cheshire. Delegated authority was given to the Director of Education and Skills and Executive member for Children's Services to receive a report on the Stage 1 consultation and make the decision whether to proceed to Stage 2.

On 5th May 2017, the Director of Education and Skills and Executive Member for Children's Services made the decision to publish the statutory notice for the closure of Buglawton Hall School and begin the Stage 2 consultation process.

This report outlines the outcomes of the Stage 1 consultation process and the proposal for closure of Buglawton Hall School.

Background

Buglawton Hall School is a local authority residential special school for boys from Year 5 to Year 11. The pupils have Statements/Education Health and Care plans for their Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties. The school is located in Congleton, Cheshire and offers residential care from Sunday evenings to Friday afternoons each week during term time (38 weeks per year) and has the capacity to accommodate around 35-40 pupils. Numbers in the school have fallen gradually since 2008 when the school had 41 pupils. There are currently 11 Manchester pupils on roll and 3 pupils from other local authorities attending as day pupils. In 2005, Buglawton Hall School joined two specialist day schools in a formal Federation of SEBD schools.

The school is funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant and the budget share for 2016/17 is £ 1.6m. Significant savings have been made by the school since 2012/13 when the budget was £1.962m. However, the number of pupils in the provision has lowered significantly as demand for this provision has reduced. There is much greater demand for specialist SEMH day placements within the city as the majority of young people want to be close to their links with the City of Manchester rather than a rural part of Cheshire. Day provision for pupils with SEMH within the City is already at capacity and over-subscribed at Key Stage 4.

Manchester currently offers a range of educational provision for children in the city with social, emotional and mental health needs. This includes:

- mainstream schools
- mainstream school with additional support
- access to alternative provision made by the primary and secondary Pupil Referral Units – this includes specialist provision
- Access to alternative provision for young people with significant mental health needs based at Leo Kelly Centre commissioned from Manchester Hospital School
- Resourced provision in 2 mainstream primary schools
- Special day provision made by Federation of SEMH school for children from Year 5 to Year 11 based across 4 sites
- 38 week term time residential provision at Buglawton Hall School.

All specialist and alternative provision including the PRUs and Hospital School is currently good or outstanding. In addition, a number of children with SEMH are currently placed in independent schools out of the city in both day and residential schools.

Reasons for proposed closure

In 2016/17, £13,582,746 of high needs funding was allocated to meeting the special educational needs of Manchester children and young people with SEMH.

There is considerable pressure on the high needs block which has been reported to the Schools Forum (December 2016) despite an increase of £1.6 m in 2017/18. This is because of increased need for Education, Health and Care plans and specialist provision.

Manchester is currently developing a strategic plan for special provision, including a review of provision in the City for children with social emotional and mental health needs. Manchester has been allocated £2.4 million of capital funding to invest in the outcomes of the review and this can include provision of training for schools, development of resourced provision in mainstream schools or expansions of special schools to create more places. This review therefore provides an opportunity for looking across the whole continuum of provision for children with SEMH and identifying where capital investment is required at each point to support increased inclusion and better outcomes for this cohort of children. The £1.6m funding currently allocated to Buglawton Hall would provide revenue funding to support these developments by creating increased numbers of day places in the City and developing educational provision that would have a positive impact on a wider number of children and young people with SEMH.

The number of children accessing day provision in the independent sector with SEMH has started to increase again because of increased need for day places within the City and insufficient places in the day provision in the city to meet this demand. The cost of independent special school places exceeds that of special school places in Local Authority provision and also means that children are being transported to locations outside of the City. However, the Local Authority are funding places at Buglawton Hall which cannot be filled and which is located too far from the City to use for day places. This is therefore not an effective use of public resources and funding released from the closure of Buglawton Hall would be invested in additional day special school places within the City.

Manchester has developed an early help and social care offer including access to Family Support, Multi Systemic Therapy and has developed Alonzi House which provides intensive family support through an outreach and short breaks programme for young people aged 11 to 17 on the edge of care. In addition, the CAMHS offer also now includes an intensive outreach service. These developments mean that there is more support available within the City for children with SEMH and their families while they are attending day provision. The reducing demand for Buglawton Hall over the last 5 years also demonstrates the declining parental preference for this type of provision. Though there is support from parents of current pupils at the school, for Buglawton Hall to remain open.

There is also a small but significant number of young people requiring specialist 52 week residential therapeutic provision because of high levels of mental health need, often following access to tier 4 mental health provision. Currently, these children are placed in independent provision outside of the City which is jointly funded by Education, Health and Social Care and decisions to place children in this type of provision are made at a multi-agency resource panel. Plans are in place to develop an integrated commissioning team across the 3 services to coordinate and oversee these arrangements. Residential specialist provision will therefore still be available for those children where multi agency assessment shows that this is most appropriate to their needs. However, this will be jointly commissioned with Health and Social Care. Buglawton Hall is not able to meet the needs of this cohort because it cannot offer 52 week provision.

Pupil numbers and admissions

There are currently 14 pupils who attend Buglawton Hall School, three of them are placed by Cheshire East, Staffordshire and Stoke local authorities. Four of the pupils attend as day pupils. The others are residential from Sunday evening to Friday afternoon. All of the pupils are boys aged between 10 and 16. All the pupils have Statements/ Education, Health and Care plans for their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) difficulties.

Arrangements for displaced pupils

Three of the pupils are in Year 11 and will leave Buglawton in July 2017. Arrangements for their post 16 education and training are already in place.

Manchester is committed to ensuring that all of the pupils on roll receive personalised provision to meet their needs. The pupils and their parents are having individual reviews of their Statements/Education, Health and Care plans which will look at their strengths and needs, their aspirations and future outcomes and the individualised provision required to meet them.

If the decision is made to close the school, Manchester pupils who wish to return to Manchester day provision will have a place available to them at one of the Federation day schools. Pupils who require residential provision will be able to transfer to other 38 week or 52 week provision depending on where their needs and outcomes can be best met. In some cases this provision will be jointly commissioned by education, health and social care. Manchester is in discussion with the local authorities responsible for the day pupils and other specialist day provision is being consulted. To ensure a smooth transition to new provision, all pupils would be supported by a caseworker who would co-ordinate the transition and multi-agency planning.

As part of the informal consultation process, local authority staff spoke to eight pupils. They all gave examples of what they enjoy at Buglawton Hall. They have good relationships with and respect for the staff, particularly with their key workers. Many of the pupils did say, however, that they would prefer to be at home and attend a school like Buglawton as a day pupil – ‘a school you can walk to’.

Implementation

The process for school closure is set out in the Department for Education Statutory Guidance: Opening and Closing Maintained Schools – April 2016. The Local Authority proposes that Buglawton Hall School closes in stages between 22nd December 2017 and Easter 2018.

Impact on the community

During the informal consultation stage (from 9th March to 5th May 2017) the Local Authority consulted with Governors, Federation of SEMH Schools senior leadership, Buglawton Hall School staff, pupils and parents. In addition, the Local Authority has had discussions with Manchester schools, other local authorities and health commissioners.

Parents

The parents that the Local Authority have spoken to support the work Buglawton Hall School does and oppose the proposal to close. Some said they would not be able to keep their young person safe at home and would want another residential school if Buglawton were to close. Further discussions will take place with parents throughout the consultation period.

Staff

The vast majority of the staff live in Cheshire or Staffordshire, so would find it difficult to relocate to Manchester. Further meetings will be held with staff and their union representatives during the consultation period.

A full formal consultation with all affected staff at risk of redundancy will take place should it be determined that redundancies are required. Trade Unions and staff will be provided with a consultation and implementation timeline outlining all stages of the process which will include a series of collective and individual consultation meetings which meet statutory redundancy consultation requirements as a minimum.

Other Federation schools

The revenue which would be made available through the closure of Buglawton Hall will be used to fund additional specialist places for children with SEMH in the City. There is currently a review of SEND provision in the City and this will project future numbers of children in the City who will require specialist SEMH provision and consider the potential for expansion of all special school places in the City, including schools for children with SEMH as well as opportunities to develop resourced provision for children with SEMH in mainstream schools.

Social care are planning to strengthen social care support to pupils of the Federation schools and their parents, by ensuring that social workers work more closely with the Federation schools' family liaison leads, the school CAMHS worker, therapists and Early Help staff, with one social worker playing a coordinating role so that families receive earlier support than currently and that all agencies are linking together effectively.

One of the aspects of life at Buglawton that pupils commented on most favourably is the range of sport and social activities they have access to. If the consultation leads to the closure of Buglawton, day Federation pupils could receive an enhanced Short Breaks offer; improving access to universal leisure and youth provision and providing some targeted activities in the evenings and holidays.

Future of the Site

Buglawton Hall is located in a rural setting with a number of buildings located on site although not all are in use or fit for purpose. Part of the building is listed. The school had a new residential block as part of Wave 1 BSF which was approved in 2008. The site is owned freehold by Manchester City Council.

During this initial period of consultation there have been a number of informal discussions with other potential providers with an interest in leasing the site for educational purposes. Discussions are ongoing.

Neighbours and suppliers

The rural location of the school means that the school has a small number of neighbours. A local farmer currently has an informal arrangement to use some of the school land. There is unlikely to be a significant impact in the local community if the site continues in use as a school. All neighbours of the school will be invited to comment on the proposal.

Businesses which currently supply the school with food and services will also be invited to respond to the proposal.

Travel

Currently, 10 pupils are transported to the school from Manchester on Sunday evenings and return on Friday afternoons – approximately 40 mile round trip. Most pupils also go home one evening during the week. Four pupils travel to the school daily from Cheshire East and Staffordshire. For the pupils who return to Manchester day schools there will be a significant decrease in daily travel by car. All pupils who require it will be offered independent travel training. For the pupils who transfer to other residential schools, car use will be similar. A full analysis of transport impact will be reported to Scrutiny Committee and Executive in September

Special educational needs provision

The proposal to close Buglawton Hall and discontinue with 38 week residential provision for pupils with SEMH will lead to overall improvements in the quality and range of educational provision for children in the City with SEMH because it will:

- Enable the development of additional specialist places in day provision for pupils with SEMH in response to increased demand for these places;
- Enable a coordinated approach from education, health and social care for all children attending day provision in the City and ensure families receive access to appropriate intervention and support when required;
- Enable the development of a greater range of specialist places for pupils with SEMH including resourced provision in mainstream schools; new types of alternative provision;
- Reduce the numbers of children with SEMH currently being placed in independent specialist day provision because the Local Authority cannot provide this provision.

The Stage 2 consultation process will take place from 16th June 2017 to 21st July 2017, 5 weeks. The final decision on this proposal will be made by Manchester City Council Executive on 13th September 2017 following discussion at Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 5th September 2017.

Comments and objections to this proposal can be made online at:
<http://www.manchester.gov.uk/consultations> by 21st July 2017

Report to Children and Young People's Scrutiny Committee and Executive:
http://www.manchester.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/2864/children_and_young_people_scrutiny_committee

Date: 12th June 2017

**MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL
NOTICE OF PROPOSAL TO CLOSE BUGLAWTON HALL SCHOOL**

Notice is given in accordance with the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 that Manchester City Council intends to close Buglawton Hall School, Buxton Road, Congleton, Cheshire East, CW12 3PQ by Easter 2018.

Buglawton Hall School is a local authority residential special school for boys from Year 5 to Year 11. The boys have Statements/Education, Health and Care plans for their Social, Emotional and Mental health (SEMH) difficulties. There are currently 11 Manchester pupils on roll and 3 from other local authorities. The school offers residential care from Sunday evenings to Friday afternoons 38 weeks per year. Buglawton Hall School is part of the Manchester Federation of SEBD Schools.

The number of pupils in the provision has lowered significantly as demand for this type of provision has reduced. There is much greater demand for specialist day placements in the city as the majority of young people want to be close to their links with the City of Manchester. Day provision within the city is currently at capacity.

Closing Buglawton Hall School will release high needs budget that will:

- Enable the additional places in day provision for pupils with SEMH
- Enable the development of an enhanced offer to all children attending day provision in the city, including better coordination between education and care, which will ensure families receive access to appropriate support when required
- Enable the development of a greater range of specialist places for pupils with SEMH, including resourced provision in mainstream schools and new types of alternative provision
- Reduce the number of pupils being placed in independent specialist day provision, because the local authority cannot provide this provision.

All pupils currently attending Buglawton Hall School and their parents will have an individualised plan for their move to new provision which will describe the personalised education and support they will receive.

This notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the proposal can be viewed on the local authority website at: <http://www.manchester.gov.uk/consultations> and comments and objections can be made online at this address.

Signed:

Liz Treacy, City Solicitor

Date: