

## **Statutory Consultation**

### ***Proposal to expand the resource base at River Mead School***

#### **Introduction**

The Mead Academy Trust in response to a request from Wiltshire Council proposes to expand its resource base (a Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision) at River Mead School, Melksham, Wiltshire by 15 places on a permanent basis. Due to exceptional need in the West Wiltshire area the resource base has hosted additional children on a temporary basis, at the request of the Local Authority, taking numbers to 30 during 21/22 academic year. This means that the total increase in places from the current temporarily increased capacity is an increase of 5 children.

This proposal has been developed in response to the increased demand for special educational needs provision in the West Wiltshire area and the success of the provision over the last year.

Should the permanent expansion of the resource base be agreed, TMAT, the council and the school will work together to ensure that all admissions are handled effectively and efficiently.

#### **The Proposal**

The resource base, which was established for 20 pupils, was set up with a SEN designation of complex needs to support the needs of children who have an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). Under this proposal the base would expand from 20 places to 35 across three classrooms. As is already the case the resource base would receive children with SEN from the local area, not limited to the school's mainstream catchment.

The expanded resource base place numbers would plan to be provided from as soon as is practicable in 2022/23 academic year, filling the additional places at a level and rate to ensure its continued quality and success of the provision.

The Published Admission Number of the school will remain the same and not be impacted by this proposal.

Wiltshire Council have requested this expansion at River Mead School to meet the needs of the growing number of children with SEND, particularly in West Wiltshire area.

#### **The case for expanding the resource base at River Mead School**

Wiltshire Council has a statutory duty to secure sufficient school places for pupils with special education needs (Children and Families Act 2014) and to ensure that these places provide both high quality provision and value for money. The council believes additional places at River Mead School will support this aim in being fulfilled within the West Wiltshire area and this is fully supported by the Trustees at TMAT. The expansion of the resource base at River Mead School is being proposed for the following reasons:

- Wiltshire Council has identified a demand for increased resource base provision in the West Wiltshire area
- River Mead School was judged to be a Good school by Ofsted at their last inspection in February 2019

- River Mead School are committed to inclusion and delivering a high-quality SEN provision the quality of which has been recognised externally in the last year and this is an opportunity to further that vision
- The resource base provision has already carried out positive work with SEN pupils it caters for directly and for the wider development of inclusion across River Mead School.
- Existing, suitable indoor and outdoor space at the school have been identified for the resource base, with additional accommodation being added to the school in due course as part of the proposal.
- River School are fully supportive of the proposal.

## **The Outcomes of the Proposal**

The Mead Academy Trust (TMAT), with the full support of Wiltshire Council is proposing to extend the resource base at River Mead School.

We believe that this will:

- Provide additional capacity to manage demand for SEN school places in Wiltshire, particularly in the West Wiltshire area where demand is high
- Support improved educational outcomes for children with SEN
- Support the further development of inclusive provision at River Mead School and TMAT, benefitting children beyond the resource base

This proposal is not expected to have any limiting impact on other local provision including local schools but will contribute towards parental choice.

## **Implementation**

Following consultation, TMAT and River Mead School will work with the local authority to ensure that all admissions are handled effectively and efficiently. Pupils will start at the new resource base from October 2022.

The expansion of the resource base at River Mead School is part of a wider plan of increased SEN school place capacity across Wiltshire to ensure countywide SEN school place sufficiency.

## **Costs and Expenditure**

River Mead School will receive SEN place funding for each child placed at the resource base and top up funding for each child which will vary according to the child's needs identified in their EHCP. The school, with support from the Trust, will be responsible for staffing and resources, and the local authority and the Trust have worked together to financially model the provision to ensure it is affordable and will not impact upon the mainstream school budget.

All statutory consultation requirements relating to these proposals have been complied with.

## **Face to face meetings**

As part of this process and to enable us to discuss what is set out in this document and answer questions in a more interactive way we have identified three face to face sessions for different groups which you may like to attend:

### **Session 1: Staff of River Mead School and employees of TMAT**

Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> November, 3.15pm River Mead School, Training Room.

### **Session 2: Parents of River Mead School**

Thursday 1 December, 3.15pm , River Mead School, Training Room.

### **Session 3: Other interested stakeholders**

Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> December, 3.15pm, River Mead School, Training Room.

Please contact the school office to let them know if you wish to attend one of these meetings – [office@rivermead.wilts.sch.uk](mailto:office@rivermead.wilts.sch.uk).

## Appendix 1: Consultation Process Indicative Timeline

|                       |   |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| <p><b>Stage 1</b></p> | <p><b>Publication</b></p>                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The proposal will be published on River Mead Website websites for 4 weeks from 18/11/2022 until 16/12/2022</li> <li>• A copy of the proposal has been sent to the Academy Advisory Group of River Mead School and Trustees of The Mead Academy Trust.</li> <li>• River Mead School will ensure that the information is released through a circulated update (this may be a paper or electronic newsletter or update) and shared with all parent/carers of all registered pupils in the weekly newsletter.</li> <li>• Local schools</li> <li>• Copies of the proposal will be available via the school, by contacting: <a href="mailto:office@rivermead.wilts.sch.uk">office@rivermead.wilts.sch.uk</a></li> <li>• Comments can be made using the via E-mail or letter to:<br/><br/>Email contact: <a href="mailto:Consultation@themeadtrust.org">Consultation@themeadtrust.org</a></li> </ul> <p><u>Address for written communication</u><br/>           Consultation<br/>           River Mead School,<br/>           Lowbourne<br/>           Melksham<br/>           Wiltshire<br/>           SN12 7ED</p> <p><b>Comments must be received by no later than the 16/12/22 to be considered in the decision-making process.</b></p> |
| <p>Stage 2</p>        | <p>Representation<br/>(Formal<br/>consultation)</p> | <p>The period of consultation will run from 18/11/22 – 16/12/22</p>   |
| <p>Stage 3</p>        | <p>Decision</p>                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Following the representation period, a decision will be made by the end of December 2022 through the Regional Schools Commissioner and Regional Headteacher Board</li> </ul> <p>The proposal can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Accepted</li> <li>○ Rejected</li> <li>○ Or accepted with modifications by the proposer</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The decision will be published within one week of the decision and;           <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ published on the same sites as the publication</li> <li>○ sent to every registered pupil</li> <li>○ and sent to the local governing body</li> </ul> </li> </ul>  |

|         |                |   |
|---------|----------------|---|
| Stage 4 | Implementation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• If approved, the new resource base class will open as soon as is practicable in the 22/23 Academic year but with likely intake starting from October 2022.</li><li>• If the proposal is accepted the council and the school will work together to ensure that all admissions are handled effectively and efficiently.</li></ul> |
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## **Appendix 2: Responses**

Comments can be made via E-mail or letter:

Email contact: [Consultation@themeadtrust.org](mailto:Consultation@themeadtrust.org)

Address for written communication

Consultation  
River Mead School,  
Lowbourn  
Melksham  
Wiltshire  
SN12 7ED

If you choose to respond via letter, please use the consultation response template below:

Please note that all comments must be received by **16/12/2022**.

| <b>Consultation Response:</b>  |       |                         |          |                    |
|--|-------|-------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| Please circle your role:   | Pupil | Parent/carer/<br>family | Governor | Member of<br>staff |
| Do you agree with the proposal to expand the resource base at River Mead School? |       | Yes                     | No       | Not sure           |
| Please Comment:  |       |                         |          |                    |
| Do you think there are other options that should be explored? (Please describe)  |       |                         |          |                    |
| Are there any other comments you would like to make?                             |       |                         |          |                    |

## Appendix 3: Further information and FAQs

This guide aims to explain what a resource base is, how it operates as an integral part of River Mead School.

### Provision – What is a resource base?

The Resource Base at River Mead currently provides specialist provision for a group of children who have complex needs, including social communication needs and/or Autism (ASC). The children are currently taught in three class groups across three classroom bases. The aim is for the total number of children to rise to 35 pupils. Children who attend resource bases are often those who need provision that is higher than they would be able to access in a mainstream school, but who do not need to attend a special school. The children who will attend the Resource Base have a range of verbal communication skills – most are verbal and some communicate through communication aids. Children usually have a good level of physical skills and do not usually use wheelchairs or walking aids. The resource base classes at River Mead are called Busy Bees, Honey Bees and Bumble Bees.

### Admissions

Admissions to the Resource Base are entirely separate from places in the main school, and are made through Wiltshire's Special Educational Needs Admissions Panel. The Resource Base needs to be named on a child's EHCP for the child to have a place at a resource base. This is separate from the school's admission processes

#### Admissions Criteria

- EHCP identifying a complex needs profile
- Wiltshire agreed provision
- Parental preference
- Acceptance at resource base sign off/ Head of School/ Trustee
- Children will be in Reception or KS1 on entry
- Children who may benefit from some exposure to mainstream classes

### Who runs the resource base?

The Resource Base is staffed and managed by the Resource Base Team which works across the schools as a Trust-wide group. The Resource Base Team works closely with River Mead School staff to manage children's integration into the main school.

#### Resource Base Team

- Chief Executive Officer – Lyssy Bolton
- Headteacher – Karen Austin
- Head of Resource Base – Lisa Penfold
- Deputy Head – Lou Harrison
- Assistant Head – Inclusion – Leala Purdie
- Busy Bees Teacher – Lisa Penfold
- Honey Bees Teacher – Clare Pike
- Bumble Bees - Teacher – Lydia Tanner

#### Additional staff as a result of the proposal

- 4 x resource base TAs

This also includes other staff across the Trust to support approaches and processes as are relevant and appropriate.

## Other Professionals

The Resource Base also has other visiting school support professionals who work with children in a range of ways, which include both direct and indirect input. This enables targets to be completed throughout the school day to support children's access to their education.

- Speech and Language Therapists (SALT)
- Occupational Therapists (OT)
- Educational Psychologists
- Clinical Psychologists
- Disability nursing team
- Music/Play Therapy

## The Role of River Mead Staff with the Resource Base

The aim of the resource base is to provide a specialist provision which is well supported and staffed but will only thrive with support and where appropriate integration with the wider River Mead School Team. Over the last year this has evolved and developed to respond to the individual children and their needs and this will continue to be the approach used. The resource base is embraced and engaged with as an integrated part of the school and where appropriate staff across the resource base and the main school support each other to learn and develop and all children are benefitting from this collective interchange.

## What about children at River Mead School who would benefit from specialist teaching?

Children at River Mead School will not automatically be able to attend the Resource Base as this is not the named provision on their EHCP. The usual method of EHCP admissions must be followed, and therefore all requests for places at the Resource Base must go through the child's SEND Lead Worker during their Annual Review.

All decisions about Resource Base places are made by the Local Authority and school staff do not have any influence over this. By attending River Mead School it does not increase the chance of getting a place in the Resource Base. Only when the Resource Base is named as the child's provision in their EHCP, will they be able to have a place in the Resource Base, and not beforehand.

However, as part of our collaborative working, Bats 1, 2 & 3 class staff and River Mead School staff do share their expertise and knowledge with all staff across the schools. This is to continually review and improve our high-quality inclusive teaching that all children will benefit from.

If/ when children who are at the Resource Base begin to thrive beyond the resource base and show the ability to succeed long term in mainstream school, this would be discussed and agreed as part of the annual review process where the appropriate setting would be identified. This would not necessarily be the school where the base is sited as would need to consider space, parental choice, and proximity to home.

## Teaching and Curriculum

As the provision is for pupils who have social, communication needs which often includes a diagnosis of Autism, the Resource Base is designed to provide a structured environment that is welcoming and inclusive. The staff team strive to give the pupils the maximum level of independence that they can achieve.

All pupils will have access to a broad and balanced curriculum which includes the core subjects (Maths, English and Science) and the Foundation subjects (all other subjects). These are taught in the classroom, by their teacher.

The method of teaching within the Resource Base is adaptive and responsive to need building in both specialist and more traditional approaches to teaching and learning engagement. The children are taught from the Primary



National Curriculum, using a differentiated approach adapted to the individual needs. Children will be typically working between the N1-YR range.

Lessons tend to be shorter than in the main school with a focus on early skills and engagement. Regular learning breaks are given to the children with extra playtimes outside. Playtimes and lunchtimes are also seen as learning opportunities for the children to develop their social communication skills and are supported by their teachers and TAs to do this.

### Methods of Teaching in the Resource Base

In the Resource Base staff use a range of methods as appropriate to an ASC friendly environment. These are likely to include but will not be limited to:

**Attention Autism** - Attention Autism is a learning approach that aims to develop natural and spontaneous communication skills in children with autism through the use of visually based and highly motivating activities. The approach was developed by speech and language therapist, Gina Davies. In Otters' class, we use this approach to teach specific objectives in literacy and maths.

**TEACCH Method**– (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children) This method promotes having a structured learning environment that encourages visual based engagement and communication. This includes well-considered physical boundaries in the learning space, having a consistent schedule, a work system which establishes expectations and independence, consistency, and visual based cues or reminders.

**PECS** (Picture Exchange Communication System) – This is where children and adults can use pictures and visual supports to communicate their wants/ needs. Even if children have verbal skills, this can help them to communicate more clearly with others, and help them to understand instructions and conversations.

**Makaton** – Uses signs and symbols to help people communicate. This is similar to sign language but simpler and child friendly.

**Back-Chaining** – this refers to breaking down a task and teaching the child it in reverse order. For example, they would start by doing the very last part of the task/ lesson to give them a sense of accomplishment. They would then gradually build this up to take on more responsibility/ independence until they can do most or all the task themselves.

**Positive Behaviour Support** - Positive behaviour support (PBS) is 'a person-centred framework for providing long-term support to people with a learning disability, and/or autism, who have, or may be at risk of developing, behaviours that challenge. It is a blend of person-centred values and behavioural science and uses evidence to inform decision-making.

### Break and Lunchtimes

Again, the approach is dependent on the needs of individual children but where this is appropriate and possible, they join in opportunities at playtimes and lunchtimes, as and when this is right for each child. There is however separate space and supervision as well.

Additional playground resources and equipment are provided for children in the resource base which will also be made available to children if and where these are appropriate/ beneficial.

### Access to mainstream lessons

The school is committed to adopting an inclusive approach in all aspects of its work. We believe that, where it is suitable for an individual learner in the Resource Base, access to mainstream classes can help to promote independence and social awareness. This takes several forms: shared playtimes, lunchtimes, assemblies, and trips, as well as participation in selected mainstream lesson, performances, and clubs. All learners will have the

opportunity to be included in this way across the school. The Resource base is part of the main school building, not set apart from it, and we seek to ensure that our practice reflects that.

## Assessment

Regular teacher assessments take place, which allow for close monitoring of the pupils' academic progress, social and personal development. These will be undertaken by the Resource Base class teacher.

## How do we know is this is successful?

- All children feel a sense of belonging in our school community
- All children achieve strong academic and social success relative to their starting points
- Collaborative planning and learning enhance the skills of staff in both settings
- Staff confidence is increased – both for River Mead staff in supporting pupils with SEN and for Resource Base class staff in developing curriculums for pupils who can access mainstream provisions.
- Everyone practices respect, tolerance and understanding.
- There is a greater awareness and understanding of ASC needs amongst the community and use of high-quality practice in supporting this
- Staff training opportunities are increased and are impactful in both settings
- Staff, pupils, and parents feel a shared sense of purpose and inclusivity