
NOTICE OF MEETING

CABINET MEMBER FOR EDUCATION

WEDNESDAY, 20 MARCH 2019 AT 5.00 PM

THE EXECUTIVE MEETING ROOM - THIRD FLOOR, THE GUILDHALL

Telephone enquiries to David Penrose 02392 834870

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If any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting has access requirements, please notify the contact named above.

Membership

Councillor Suzy Horton (Cabinet Member)

Councillor Tom Coles

Councillor Hannah Hockaday

(NB This agenda should be retained for future reference with the minutes of this meeting).

A G E N D A

- 1 Apologies for Absence**
- 2 Declarations of Members' Interests**
- 3 Willows Centre for Children - end of statutory consultation to close and reopen the Centre under Solent Academies Trust (Pages 3 - 20)**

Purpose of report

The report sets out the outcome of the statutory consultation which was undertaken between 18th January 2019 and 15th February 2019 on the proposal to close Willows Centre for Children and to continue to deliver the specialist provision provided by Willows as part of an expanded Cliffdale Primary Academy, operated by Solent Academies Trust.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:

- a) Consider the response to the statutory consultation carried out on the proposal to close Willows Centre for Children**

- b) Authorise the Director for Children, Families and Education to implement the proposal so that Willows Centre for Children closes at midnight on 31st August 2019 provided that the application to make significant changes to Clifffdale Primary Academy from 1st September 2019 is approved by the Secretary of State.**

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Agenda Item 3



Portsmouth
CITY COUNCIL

Title of meeting:	Cabinet Member for Education
Date of meeting:	20 th March 2019
Subject:	Statutory process to close Willows Centre for Children and to continue to deliver the specialist provision provided by Willows as part of an expanded Cliffdale Primary Academy - outcome of statutory consultation
Report from:	Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families and Education
Report by:	Caroline Corcoran, Head of Sufficiency, Participation & Resources, Education Service
Wards affected:	All
Key decision:	No
Full Council decision:	No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 This report sets out the outcome of the statutory consultation which was undertaken between 18th January 2019 and 15th February 2019 on the proposal to close Willows Centre for Children and to continue to deliver the specialist provision provided by Willows as part of an expanded Cliffdale Primary Academy, operated by Solent Academies Trust.

2. Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:

- a) Consider the response to the statutory consultation carried out on the proposal to close Willows Centre for Children
- b) Authorise the Director for Children, Families and Education to implement the proposal so that Willows Centre for Children closes at midnight on 31st August 2019 provided that the application to make significant changes to Cliffdale Primary Academy from 1st September 2019 is approved by the Secretary of State.

3. Background

- 3.1 Willows Centre for Children is a maintained special school offering specialist early years and primary phase education to children aged 3 to 7 with Special Educational Needs (SEN) from a site on Battenburg Road next to Cliffdale

Primary Academy (a special academy school for pupils aged 5 to 11). The Willows Centre for Children has 48 full time equivalent specialist places for nursery, reception and year 1 pupils. Pupils are placed at the Willows by the Local Authority.

- 3.2 Between 15th October and 10th December 2018 the Council and the Governors of Willows Centre for Children undertook a pre-statutory consultation to jointly consult on a proposal to close the Willows Centre for Children and to continue to deliver the specialist provision provided by the Willows as part of an expanded Cliffdale Primary Academy, operated by Solent Academies Trust. The consultation document is attached at Appendix 1.
- 3.3 The pre-statutory consultation included the parents and carers of all children attending the Willows and was circulated widely to Ward Councillors, Portsmouth MPs, colleagues in neighbouring Local Authorities, the Portsmouth Anglican and Roman Catholic dioceses, Portsmouth Parent Voice, all Portsmouth Headteachers and Senior Council Officers in Children's Social Care and Health services. A summary of the responses to the pre-statutory consultation is attached at Appendix 2.
- 3.4 As Willows Centre for Children is a community maintained special school, a closure of the school is governed by The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013. The Local Authority is the proposer and the decision maker for this process. The proposer has to follow a five stage statutory process set out below:

Table 1. Statutory process for the closure of a maintained school

Stage	Description	Timescale	Comments
Stage 1	Pre-statutory consultation	No required timescale but at least 6 weeks recommended	
Stage 2	Publication (statutory proposal / notice)		
Stage 3	Representation (formal consultation)	Must be at least 4 weeks	As prescribed in the 'Prescribed Alteration' regulations.
Stage 4	Decision	LA should decide a proposal within 2 months otherwise it will fall to the Schools Adjudicator.	Any appeal to the adjudicator must be made within 4 weeks of the decision.
Stage 5	Implementation	No prescribed timescale	However it must be as specified in the published statutory notice, subject to any modifications agreed by the decision-maker.

- 3.5 On 16th January 2019, following consideration of the outcome of a pre-statutory consultation, the Cabinet Member for Education authorised the Director of Children,

Families and Education to proceed with the publication of the proposal and the formal representation stage of the statutory process.

- 3.6 The Council formally proposed the closure of Willows Centre for Children and for Solent Academies Trust to propose (the linked) expansion and age range changes to Cliffdale Primary Academy. The four week formal representation period started on 18th January 2019 with the publication of the required public notice in The News. The formal consultation was conducted in line with the regulations and statutory guidance and ended on 15th February 2019.

Outcome of Statutory Consultation

- 3.7 All parents and carers of pupils at the school were notified that the Council was proceeding with the statutory process to close Willows Centre for Children. The statutory proposal (attached as Appendix 3) was distributed to parents/carers as required by the regulations and statutory guidance and the public notice was displayed at the entrance to the school for the duration of the representation period. The statutory proposal was also published on the PCC website. The proposal and public notice were both sent to the Department for Education on 23rd January 2019 (within a week of publication). No comments were submitted to the Council during the representation period.

Academy Trust Significant Change Application

- 3.8 Solent Academies Trust has submitted the business case required to obtain Secretary of State approval for the organisational changes to Cliffdale Primary Academy. A decision is expected by the end of March 2019.
- 3.9 The proposal to close Willows Centre for Children would only be implemented if the changes to Cliffdale Primary Academy are approved.

4. Reasons for recommendations

- 4.1 Willows Centre for Children is a good school providing good quality education, but as a very small school Willows Centre for Children faces increasing financial uncertainty. Ensuring sustainability and financial viability is increasingly challenging for small schools.
- 4.2 There is a continuing need for specialist nursery places in Portsmouth and the proposal would safeguard the future of the provision which would be provided going forward by Solent Academies Trust. Staff from the Willows Centre for Children would transfer to Solent Academies Trust under TUPE legislation and pupils would continue to attend the provision.

5. Equality impact assessment

- 5.1 An equality impact assessment is not required as the recommendation does not have a negative impact on any of the protected characteristics as described in the Equality Act 2010. The closure of Willows Centre for children will only be implemented if replacement provision can be provided by the expansion of Cliffdale Primary Academy and there will be no loss of provision, expertise and specialism for pupils with Special Educational Needs in the City.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The statutory process for the closing of a maintained special school and nursery is set out in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 ("EIA 2006") and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013. Under s.15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, an LA can propose the closure of all categories of maintained schools including a community, community special or maintained nursery school. The LA will be the decision-maker of the proposal and must follow the statutory process.
- 6.2 The statutory process for closing a community special school or nursery school requires consultation to be carried out prior to publishing the statutory notice and proposal. Following this, the process requires the publication of the statutory proposal and a representation period of 4 weeks from the date of publication of the proposal. The proposal must include the information contained in Schedule 2 to the Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations 2013.
- 6.3 Following the end of the representation period, the LA must make a decision within a period of two months; otherwise the proposal must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.
- 6.4 In addition to the statutory process being followed, the decision-maker must have regard to the statutory decision-makers guidance "Opening and Closing Maintained Schools" November 2018. This states that in considering a closure of a nursery school, decisions-makers should adopt a presumption against the closure of nursery schools unless the case for closure is strong and the proposal can demonstrate that there will be no loss in quantity, expertise and specialism.
- 6.5 It is within the Cabinet Member's powers, as set out in the City Council's constitution, to:
- Reject the proposal;
 - Approve the proposal without modification;
 - Approve the proposal with such modifications as they think desirable, after consulting the LA; or
 - Approve the proposal - with or without modification - subject to certain conditions being met.

7. Director of Finance's comments

- 7.1. The School and Early Years Finance (England) regulations set out the process with regards to the funding of special schools. Special schools are funded on a "place plus" arrangement in that they receive place funding at the national rate of £10,000 per place, plus a top-up which reflects the needs of the children and will follow the child as they move between schools.
- 7.2. The authority currently funds 48 places at Willows Centre for Children and will continue to commission and fund 48 places at the expanded Cliffdale Primary Academy, following the closure of Willows Centre for Children. Each pupil transferring to Cliffdale will receive top-up funding according to their level of need at the rates agreed by the Cabinet Member for Education and endorsed by Schools Forum.
- 7.3. Legislation sets out that any balance remaining (surplus or deficit) on the closure of a school will return to the Dedicated Schools Grant. Whilst it is hoped that the school will breakeven at the date of closure, there is a potential risk of a deficit of up to £100,000, which is being closely monitored and mitigating action taken wherever possible.

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Signed by: Alison Jeffery, Director of Children, Families & Education

Appendices:

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location
Statutory Guidance - "Opening and closing maintained schools - statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers" November 2018.	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools

The recommendation(s) set out above were approved/ approved as amended/ deferred/ rejected by on

.....
Signed by:

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Proposal to close Willows Centre for Children (linked to the proposal of the Solent Academies Trust to expand the provision at Cliffdale Primary Academy)

Portsmouth City Council and the Governors of Willows Centre for Children are undertaking a consultation to seek the views of parents and carers of pupils at the school, staff and other stakeholders on the future of Willows Centre for Children.

We want to ensure that the children currently attending Willows Centre for Children can continue to benefit from high quality educational provision that enables them to achieve good outcomes. In order to make sure that this continues to be the case, we are proposing some changes to the way that the education on the Willows site is delivered, as outlined below.

Background

Willows Centre for Children is a community maintained special school, which provides specialist education for children aged 2 to 7 years of age. The school has a total of 42 full time spaces for Early Years and Key Stage 1 children who are allocated a place by the Local Authority because of their Special Educational Needs (SEN). The school is located in North End on a site which is next door to Cliffdale Primary Academy (which is operated by Solent Academies Trust).

Willows Centre for Children has strong links with Cliffdale Primary Academy. Pupils at the Willows currently make use of some of the outside space at the neighbouring Cliffdale Primary Academy site. A significant proportion of the pupils attending Willows will move on to Cliffdale Primary Academy when they leave the school.

The proposal

The Council is seeking your views on a plan to close Willows Centre for Children but to continue to deliver the specialist provision provided by Willows as part of an expanded Cliffdale Primary Academy.

Even though a replacement provision would be provided on the same site, the Council has to consult on a formal proposal to close the current Willows Centre for Children. Solent Academies Trust will consult separately on the linked proposal to make the necessary changes to Cliffdale Primary Academy. The age range of Cliffdale Primary Academy would be changed from 4 to 11 years to 2 to 11 years so that the needs of nursery age pupils with Special Educational Needs can continue to be met within Portsmouth.

There would also need to be an increase in the number of places at Cliffdale Primary Academy to accommodate the additional pupils and the school would expand onto the Willows site using the existing buildings and facilities to provide the additional SEN places.

If both proposals were to be implemented Willows Centre for Children would close on **31st August 2019**, and Cliffdale Primary Academy would expand from **1st September 2019** in order to accommodate the Willows provision.

APPENDIX 1

The Willows Centre for Children would not close unless the expansion of Cliffdale Primary Academy goes ahead.

Why make these changes?

Willows Centre for Children is a Good school providing good quality education, but as a very small school Willows Centre for Children faces increasing financial uncertainty. Ensuring sustainability and financial viability is increasingly challenging for small schools. In order to ensure sustainability many Portsmouth schools have already chosen to become academies and join strong local Multi Academy Trusts (MATs) benefiting from shared resources, economies of scale, improved transition arrangements for pupils and better opportunities for the professional development and progression of staff.

Solent Academies Trust is a strong Multi Academy Trust responsible for three special schools in the city including Cliffdale Primary Academy. Cliffdale Primary Academy is judged by Ofsted to be an outstanding school.

Willows Centre for Children has strong links with Cliffdale Primary Academy. The Cliffdale school site neighbours the Willows site and Willows currently make use of some the outside space at Cliffdale Primary Academy.

A significant proportion of the pupils attending Willows will move on to Cliffdale Primary Academy. These pupils would benefit from not having to transition between schools. Many other pupils move on to Mary Rose Academy which is also operated by Solent Academies Trust.

The changes to both schools will only be implemented if both proposals are agreed.

What would the new provision look like to parents and children?

Should these proposals be implemented Cliffdale Primary Academy would expand to provide a specialist education for pupils with SEN aged 2 to 5 from the current Willows site. The nursery age pupils placed in the special school by the Local Authority would still be housed in the same buildings, but the buildings would be managed as part of Cliffdale Primary Academy (by Solent Academies Trust). Any pupils currently at the school will be unaffected.

What would happen to the staff of Willows Centre for Children?

The staff of Willows Centre for Children would move to the new replacement provision. Staff are currently employed by Portsmouth City Council and they would transfer to Solent Academies Trust under TUPE legislation. Consultation with staff will take place.

What would happen to the pupils of Willows Centre for Children?

Pupils with Special Educational Needs that attend Willows Centre for Children would automatically transfer to the new provision created by the expansion of Cliffdale Primary Academy and would continue to be educated in the existing accommodation.

What happens next?

The Council is consulting on the proposal from **15th October 2018 until 10th December 2018** and would like to hear your views. Feedback from the consultation will be reported to Portsmouth City Council's Cabinet Member for Education in January 2019. The Cabinet Member will then decide whether to proceed to the formal statutory process to close

APPENDIX 1

Willows Centre for Children. The statutory process commences with the publication of a statutory notice followed by a 4 week statutory consultation period to allow comments or objections to be sent to Portsmouth City Council. At the end of this period, Portsmouth City Council will make a final decision.

How can you have your say?

The consultation opens on **15th October 2018** and the Council would like to hear your views.

We will be holding public drop in meetings at The Willows at **9.30 a.m. on Thursday 22nd November** and **3.00 p.m. on Friday 23rd November**.

Everyone is welcome to attend either of these sessions. Please come along and ask us any questions you may have about what this means for the school and the community.

Anyone can comment on the proposal until midday on **10th December 2018**. Comments can be submitted to the school using the attached response form or comments can be submitted directly to Portsmouth City Council:

by email to eandsc@portsmouthcc.gov.uk (please title your email Willows Proposal)

or by post to Janet Andrews
Education Service
Portsmouth City Council
Civic Offices
Guildhall Square
Portsmouth
PO1 2EA

You can get this Portsmouth City Council information in large print, Braille, audio or in another language by calling 9284 1717



**Response Form****Pre-statutory consultation on the proposal to close Willows Centre for Children**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Please tick:Parent ☐ Governor ☐ Staff ☐ Other (please state) ☐ _____**Do you support the proposal?**YES ☐ NO ☐**Comments (please attach separate sheets of paper if necessary):**

Signature: _____ Date _____

It is important that you sign and date this form.

Responses must be received by Monday 10th December 2018.**Please return response forms either to the School Office, or by post to:**Janet Andrews, Education, Portsmouth City Council, Floor 2 Core 6, Civic Offices,
Guildhall Square, Portsmouth. PO1 2EA.**or by email to eandsc@portsmouthcc.gov.uk** (please title your email **Willows Proposal**)

The information provided will be used for the analysis of responses received as part of the Pre-Statutory Consultation on the proposal and for the purpose of compiling recommendations for Portsmouth City Council. Personal information will not be shared with any other sections of the Council.

APPENDIX 2. SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO PRE STATUTORY CONSULTATION IN RESPECT OF THE CLOSURE OF WILLOWS CENTRE FOR CHILDREN

Consultation Responses

There were 24 responses to the consultation question 'Do you support the proposal?'
These are summarised in the table below

	Yes	No	Undecided
Parent	5	6	
Staff	1	7	1
Governor	3		
Other	1		
Total	10	10	1

There were also three respondents who submitted comments about the unrelated closure of the Catkins at the Willows day care provision

Consultation Drop In Sessions

There were two consultation drop-in sessions, timed for the beginning and end of the school day.

No-one attended the first drop-in session (at the start of the day).

One family and the attached LA Educational Psychologist attended the second session to find out more about the proposal.

Consultation Comments

The following written comments were received.

Think this is a good idea

I have seen evidence to prove Willows has done wonders with children's learning.

Both my sons are developing their learning skills better since attending Willows.

Anything that keeps the centre open is a good thing as they can help more children.

I support it in as much as there is a lack of provision for SEN children. However I think it is very unfair that SEN children have no choice on different schools as their mainstream peers do.

I'm a long term member of staff having seen many changes over the years. I don't think joining Cliffdale is a particularly bad thing but would hope that we don't lose nursery aged children as there is obviously a need. We are already seeing children not attending due to transport not being available. I'm worried that vulnerable children will get lost.

I would like Willows to stay as a separate provision under Solent academy. I feel very sad to think Willows will close, it has been a fantastic provision for children with SEN and children attending day care with SEN have been well supported. Early intervention is very important and we work closely with the parents and children to ensure the children get the support they need. I'm surprised to hear the school is not financially viable, I understand the daycare was not viable but the school has never been in deficit. I would like to see Willows keep its name. I thought Solent academies were taking over the running of the school but didn't think we had to merge with Cliffdale.

I have worked at the Willows for a number of years. It's a disappointment that day care is going. It's a very important part of Willows.

It is a shame to close Willows as it has a very strong reputation and is close to many parents hearts. Can we keep its identity?

Why was SEN money used to keep day care open and not spent on the children?

Nobody has answered this question!

We can and would survive on our own as a school if we didn't have to use some of our budget on day care

Give Willows a chance to stand alone once more and not to merge with anyone.

- Worried Willows will lose its identity
- Would be happy with joining academy if we kept our DfE number
- Successful school/nursery in our own right is academisation necessary?
- Day care deficit has reflected badly on school budget, on its own it would not create any deficit

I feel that Willows will be losing its own identity if merged with Cliffdale. The school has ensured sustainability and was financially viable standing alone before day care, this would remain the same if given a chance.

The proposal fills me with sadness and trepidation. The adage "bigger isn't better" immediately comes to mind. I have worked at Willows for 14 years and I have been proud to be part of a well respected establishment in the City of Portsmouth. The contribution "Willows" has made to the lives of many vulnerable children and families is immeasurable. By closing Willows, the security net offered by a smaller, more user friendly school will be lost forever. I appreciate the high level of expertise and support offered by Cliffdale and I acknowledge the professionalism of the staff employed there but, I feel, the "vibe" of the school is more of a corporate experience where figures and results are paramount. I fully accept that the change is inevitable and is most certainly politically driven, which seems to be the way of the world that we live in now. I reiterate that the whole business saddens me when I think too deeply about it. Please can you confirm that you have read my email and that this whole consultation process isn't just a paper exercise that you have to fulfil.

Thank you.

I accept the proposal because I understand that it will not be financially viable for Willows to be independent, however I do have concerns that we need to make sure that the specific needs of Early Years children are not lost within a Primary school.

Willows joining the Solent Academy will be an opportunity to learn from each other and building upon the other's experiences and expertise. It is important that Willows is seen as a joint partner rather than just an extension of current provision.

I have 2 main concerns about the proposal to "expand Cliffdale provision"

1. If the proposal is not managed carefully then the best practice and experience of a Nursery provision could be lost. The new "Cliffdale provision" needs to consider carefully how to ensure that the Reception and Nursery provision is managed so it is distinct from the primary phase and retains the distinctiveness of early years principles. Willows Special educational needs provision is built upon good Early Years principles from birth to 5 years. The Reception year group is often the bridge between Early Years and Primary age children but does not always encompass the breadth of the provision required for younger Early Years children. Cliffdale does not have the full range of Early Years expertise.

Willows Centre for Children has built up its approaches on the following Early Years principles:

- **Relationships** as the foundation for learning: the role of the named **key worker** for each child / parent to develop trust and a foundation for learning. Nurturing **parent relationships** through home visiting so that the home and school share information to enable best learning outcomes for the child. When the children first come to Willows the parents often are only just starting to come to terms with their child's difficulties and value the opportunity to talk to staff. Each room has a Team of staff where Specialist Teaching Assistant and Teaching Assistants share in planning and reviewing the learning with the teacher.
 - **Play is a tool for learning** based on using their interests and skills to help them to generalise and make the next steps in their learning. It is often through getting alongside the child's play that the best learning and interactions take place. Play provides an opportunity for the child to develop independence, be relaxed and enjoy learning. The adult has the opportunity to observe how the child uses their learning to plan carefully the next opportunities for learning. It can be surprising at times what skills the children are able to demonstrate in play.
 - **The specific need of 2 year olds.** The nursery recognises the specific needs of the youngest children and has as a whole team looked at the specific needs of the age group and how best to meet them.
 - **The foundation of the Prime areas for learning.** The early years focuses upon the development of the **prime areas** (Personal, social and emotional development, communication and language and physical development) which are the building blocks for other specific areas of learning such as literacy and numeracy to be built upon. Without a curriculum grounded in developing these Prime skills the children will not have the skills to develop their learning in the National curriculum in the Primary phase.
2. "Willows Centre for Children" has an established history of SEN Early Years support in the city. Even before I ever worked at Willows, it has been a beacon of SEN Early Years provision. Willows has a long standing reputation for its SEN early Years provision and the

particular needs of Early Years phase. A few parents are alarmed about the changes ahead as the proposal talks about the "expansion of the provision at Cliffdale Primary academy". If the name of "Willows" is retained in some form e.g. naming the building or Early Years provision then the positive history of Willows will be retained and parents will be more reassured about the proposed changes seeing it as an opportunity to provide more streamlined provision and share resources and expertise rather than just a "takeover" or merger.

Whilst in support of a more formal arrangement between Cliffdale and Willows with all of the benefits this will bring it is regrettable that the closure of Willows is necessary for this to happen. Willows Centre for Children is a well-established Portsmouth school with a history of innovation and excellence within early years. It has made a positive difference to families and children since 1974 as a Nursery School, Early Excellence Centre, Phase One Children's Centre and Outreach provider. Always judged 'good' or 'outstanding' by Ofsted it has been able to support settings within the community with high quality training and support.

It was disappointing that our Children's Centre had to close and we have strived to continue work with vulnerable families without funding.

The closure of Catkins Day Care in March 2019 takes away the exceptional opportunities for inclusion that have typified the school since 2005 and is a great loss not only to the school but the City.

The decision that Willows has to close in order to become part of Solent Academy trust is a further huge blow.

I am concerned that the provision for the youngest children with high levels of additional need will be further reduced; already 20 of our nursery places are being used for school age children. The number of places for nursery aged children is to be further reduced in 2019. These decisions are difficult ones linked to funding and Special School capacity but are at great cost to early inclusion. I hope that the identity of Willows will remain, the sharp focus upon Early Years excellence be maintained and that the most vulnerable young children and their families will continue to be supported with their individual needs at the heart of what happens.

Having been lucky enough to have a son that benefitted hugely from attending Willows, I think it is a huge loss to the city that such a great nursery is closing. However the changes are necessary to continue the great support given to SEN children and their education.

As the Chair of Governors and member of the working party, I reluctantly support the proposal to close the Willows. My decision to support is made on the information provided to us by the City Council and the fact that the RSC has confirmed that the Willows does not currently meet the criteria to become an academy in its own right. The natural progression would be to join an existing academy and that would be the S A T.

My ambivalence in supporting the proposal is due to the fact that The Willows has been an integral part of the provision for special needs and has always had positive inspections. In addition, the

necessity to close the day care service means the loss of a much needed provision in the city and may mean losing sight of social inclusion.

The Willows has a very committed, experienced and caring staff team who I know will make the transition in a professional manner.

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Statutory proposal for the closure of Willows Centre for Children

Notice is given in accordance with The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 that Portsmouth City Council intends to discontinue Willows Centre for Children (a community maintained special school for pupils aged 2 to 7 years) with effect from 01 September 2019.

This proposal is linked to a proposal published by Solent Academy Trust to make significant changes to Cliffdale Primary Academy namely

- to change the age range of Cliffdale Primary Academy to 2 to 11 years from September 2019
- to increase the total pupil numbers at Cliffdale Primary Academy to pupils from September 2019 by physical expansion on to the Willows Centre for Children site

The closure of Willows Centre for Children cannot be implemented if the changes to Cliffdale Primary Academy are not approved.

1. Contact details

Name and address of local authority publishing the proposal:

Portsmouth City Council, Civic Offices, Guildhall Square, Portsmouth, PO1 2EA.

Name, address and category of school proposed to be discontinued:

Willows Centre for Children, Battenburg Avenue, Portsmouth, PO2 0SN a community special school.

2. Implementation

Date on which it is proposed to close the school: midnight on 31st August 2019.

3. Reason for closure:

Portsmouth City Council, in partnership with the governing body of the School, is proposing that Willows Centre for Children closes with effect from 1st September 2019. This would allow Solent Academies Trust to expand Cliffdale Primary Academy onto the Willows site and use the existing accommodation to provide an extended provision equivalent to that provided by Willows.

This would protect the future provision of specialist early years education for pupils with SEN as a larger special school will be more resilient benefitting from economies of scale.

4. Pupil numbers and admissions

Willows Centre for Children currently has 42 planned places for Early Years and Key Stage 1 children with Special Educational Needs (aged 2 to 7 years of age).

5. Displaced pupils

This proposal is linked to a proposal to make changes to Cliffdale Primary Academy whereby Cliffdale would open a provision equivalent to the provision that is closing. Under these proposals the pupils of Willows Centre for Children would transfer to the expanded Cliffdale Primary Academy from 1st September 2019 and no pupils would be displaced.

6. Impact on the community

As the linked proposal would see a provision similar to that provided by the Willows Centre for Children continuing to operate from the school site there will be no impact on the community or the provision for the education of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) in Portsmouth.

Many of the children that attend the Willows continue their education at Cliffdale when they leave the Willows. These pupils would benefit from not having to transition between schools.

7. Balance of denominational provision

Not applicable as the school does not have a religious character.

8. Rural primary schools

Not applicable as the school is not a rural primary school.

9. Maintained nursery schools

Not applicable as the school is a community special school.

10. Provision for 16-19 year olds

Not applicable as Willows Centre for Children is a school for primary aged pupils.

11. Special educational needs provision

Willows Centre for Children provides specialist education for early years and Key Stage 1 pupils aged 2 to 7 years and the neighbouring Cliffdale Primary Academy provides specialist education for (SEN) pupils aged 4 to 7 years. All pupils attending either Willows Centre for Children or Cliffdale Primary Academy have allocated a place by the Local Authority because of their Special Educational Needs (SEN).

The linked proposal would see the age range of Cliffdale Primary Academy change and the establishment of a 2 to 5 early year's provision. Additional Key Stage 1 places would also be provided to ensure that there is no reduction in the overall number of school places for pupils with SEN.

There are strong links between the two schools and a significant proportion of the children that have attended Willows Centre for Children in the past have continued their education at Cliffdale Primary Academy on leaving the school. These pupils would benefit from not having to transition between schools.

It is anticipated that the linked proposals would not adversely affect the provision for children with SEN in Portsmouth.

12. Travel

Cliffdale Primary Academy is located next door to Willows Centre for Children and under the linked proposals Cliffdale would expand on to the Willows site. There would therefore be no impact on the travel arrangements for pupils as they would continue to be education on the same site.

13. Representations

Anyone can make a representation in respect of the proposal to close Willows Centre for children until midnight on 15th February 2019 either

by post to : Janet Andrews, Education, Portsmouth City Council, Floor 2 Core 6, Civic Offices, Guildhall Square, Portsmouth, PO1 2EA

or

by email to: eandsc@portsmouthcc.gov.uk (please title your email Willows proposal)

This proposal is published on the Portsmouth City Council website

www.portsmouth.gov.uk (search School Information).