

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.
