Woodford Valley Church of England Primary Academy

Significant change proposal

Consultation

September 2017
The proposal summary

The Governing Body of Woodford Valley Church of England Academy is consulting on a proposal to make a significant change to Woodford Valley Church of England Academy, Middle Woodford, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6NR.

The proposal is to remove the ‘reserved provision’ for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) at the academy. This is the Resource Base that the academy hosts on behalf of Wiltshire Council.

The academy currently makes provision for the following special educational needs: Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) / Social and Communication Difficulties.

Views are sought on this proposal by Thursday 2nd November 2017.

The governing board will consider the results of consultation. They will then decide whether to submit a full business case to the Education Funding Agency for decision and for determination by the Regional Schools Commissioner for the south west of England.

The academy is proposing to cease the reserved provision at the academy on 31 December 2017. The academy will work with Wiltshire Council to ensure the children in the provision are placed in other provision that is more appropriate to meet their needs or in the mainstream academy. The academy intends to continue to meet the needs of children with special educational needs, including those with a diagnosis of autism, where they are appropriately placed within the mainstream academy.

Background

The academy hosts a single class Resource Base (the resourced provision) for primary aged children who have a diagnosis of autism. There are 7 places in one small classroom at the school. Wiltshire Council commissions places in the Resource Base and allocates places to children whose needs it feels can be best met at the academy. The academy has provided this facility for 17 years. Children are transported from a relatively wide geographical area to the school, a much wider area than that normally served by the school. Long journeys at the beginning and the end of the school day can exacerbate some children’s behaviours.

The presumption behind Resource Base provision is that there will be inclusion in the mainstream school for up to 80% of the time for those children in the base. This is for both social interaction and learning. In the case of Woodford Valley, this is no longer the case for many children in the Resource Base, such is the nature of their special educational need and their often challenging behaviour. Some children can on occasions require 2 to 1 support (2 staff to 1 child). The model of provision is proving to be unworkable. For some of the children in the Resource Base, there is little, if any, inclusion in mainstream.

The academy has also suffered pressures on funding for the Resource Base and is facing financial difficulties. Funding for children in the Resource Base comes from the schools ‘high needs block’ in Wiltshire. This has been under significant pressure to make savings and has meant a reduction in ‘top up’ funding in the current financial year. If the
school continues to provide a Resource Base under current arrangements, it will face a
deficit budget in the current academic and financial year. Physically, the Resource Base
is simply a separate and quite small classroom at the school. Unlike newly created
Resource Bases in Wiltshire, there are no specialist facilities such as a sensory room or
separate quiet areas that are needed for children with a higher level of need. Further, the
school is having difficulty attracting and retaining teaching staff to work in the Resource
Base. One teacher has resigned her post from August 2017 and the other is on maternity
leave, not due to return until February 2018. The school has experience that recruiting a
new teacher to lead and manage the Resource base at the same time would be
extremely difficult.

Woodford Valley is a small school with 177 on roll (169 in mainstream). There are
currently 8 children in the Resource Base - almost 5% of the total. There are 3 children
with statements/MyPlans in the mainstream academy as well as 38 other pupils with
clearly identified special or additional needs.

The academy is proud of its reputation for meeting the needs of children with special
educational needs. We will continue to meet the needs of children with a range of special
educational needs in a mainstream setting.

Unfortunately, however, the current model of resourced provision at Woodford Valley is
becoming unworkable. Consequently, the academy is seeking to consult on its proposal
to cease the reserved provision at Woodford Valley on 31 December 2017.

Effects of the proposed change

What will be the effect on children in the Resource Base?

For all children in the Resource Base, the school will work with their parents/carers and
with Wiltshire Council to secure the most appropriate school placement for them and to
effect a carefully managed transition to the new setting. Some of the pupils in the
Resource base may transfer to a mainstream school. Others, particularly those who
travel some distance currently, will transfer to places at other schools that are more local
to them. Under this proposal, for those children that currently travel long distances to the
Resource Base, being in schools closer to the children’s homes may mean that they
remain in their locality and create relationships with peers closer to home, enabling
families to build more local support networks.

What will be the effect on local and wider specialist provision?

There is other Resource Base provision and specialist capacity in the Salisbury area,
including special schools, that may be suitable for some of the children from the
Resource Base. Woodford Valley Academy will continue to admit children with special
educational needs. The impact on local SEN provision will be limited, with a reduction of
8 places in the Resource Base. There will be some increase in the demand for specialist
placements in other settings in other parts of the county where we seek to provide more
suitable local placements for some of the children.

We are aware of our responsibilities under public sector equalities duties. Our aim is to
make provision for children with SEN, particularly ASD, which is both effective and
inclusive in a mainstream setting. Current provision is proving to be less inclusive than it ought to be.

**What will be the effect on the school?**

A number of members of staff are employed to work exclusively in the Resource Base. These staff would be 'at risk' of redundancy or a reduction in hours and/or salary should the proposal for a significant change at the academy go ahead. We will consult with staff and their representatives. We will meet staff collectively and individually as required.

**Consultation and decision-making**

Department for Education guidance says that among 'Other significant changes' to an academy are 'Changes affecting reserved provision for pupils with special educational needs (SEN)' that may include 'proposals to add or remove the reserved provision, or to increase or decrease the numbers for which the reserved provision caters..'.

The academy is proposing to cease the reserved provision (the Resource Base) at the school on 31st December 2017.

The academy will work with Wiltshire Council to ensure the children in the reserved provision are more appropriately placed in other specialist provision that better meets their needs, or in the mainstream school where this is possible and appropriate.

We are seeking views on this proposal from parents/carers, staff, governors, schools in Wiltshire and other interested parties by **Thursday 2nd November 2017**.

The Governing Body of Woodford Valley Academy will consider those responses. Depending on the outcome of the consultation exercise, the Governing Body will then submit a ‘business case’ for a significant change at the academy via the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for consideration by the Regional Schools’ Commissioner for the south west of England in the Autumn term 2017. The Regional Schools Commissioner, on advice from the South-West England Headteacher Board, decides the outcome of requests for significant changes from academies or free schools.

**How to respond**

Parent /Carers - a meeting is being arranged with parents/carers of children at the Resource Base. If parents/carers are unable to attend, they will be telephoned on the same day.

Individual appointments will be made with parents/carers at their request.

Stakeholders/parents/carers - a questionnaire is attached for you to complete.

To send your comments on the proposals email us at admin@woodfordvalley.wilts.sch.uk or return the attached form via email or to the school at the address above by **Thursday 2nd November 2017**.

Please let us know what you think.
Significant Change Proposal for Woodford Valley primary academy

Questionnaire

The proposal is to remove the ‘reserved provision’ for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) at Woodford Valley Primary Academy. This is the Resource Base that the school hosts on behalf of Wiltshire Council.

Please tick one statement

I support the proposal

I am undecided about the proposal

I do not support the proposal

Please give your reasons and add any comments you may wish to make:

Please tell us who you are and, if applicable, which organisation you represent

Name: ..................................................................................................................................................

You are:

School governor

School teacher

Other school staff member

Parent/carer of school pupil

Other (please specify)