

## Wirral Council - Public Notice

### Prescribed alterations at The Observatory School

Notice is given in accordance with Section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and section 5(1) of the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools)(England) Regulations 2013 that Wirral Council ('the Council') is proposing to make the following prescribed alterations to The Observatory School, Bidston Village Road, Bidston, Wirral, CH43 7QT ('the School') which is a community special school, as follows:

- **Change the lower age limit of the School** from 11 years to 8 years with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2022. The current age range is 11 to 16. The proposed age range is 8 to 16.

The School is a mixed 11-16 community special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH). In April 2018, the School began a trial scheme to offer a small number of base places for children in Year 5 and Year 6. The trial Key Stage 2 base has proved successful. The Council and the School now wish to make the trial scheme into a permanent change to the School's age range. Year 5 and Year 6 are Key Stage 2 year groups and whilst there are no current plans to admit any Year 3 or Year 4 pupils, the view of the Council and the School is that the proposed age range change should incorporate all Key Stage 2 year groups as forward planning in case the need arises in future.

This proposal is linked to the following proposal to increase the number of places at the School.

- Permanent **change to the number of places** at the School to 100 across the age range

Prior to 2008, the School offered 40 places across the 11-16 age range. To accommodate a projected increase in demand for specialist provision, the offer was expanded to 50 places following consultation with the Schools Forum, then to 55 places from September 2015. A further expansion to 76 places was put in place from September 2019.

At January 2022, there are now 86 11 to 16 age pupils on roll, with an additional 18 in the Key Stage 2 base. The Council and the School wish to make the increase in places into a permanent change, incorporating the Key Stage 2 base places resulting from the change in age range.

- Expansion of the School onto an **additional satellite site to** be located at Twickenham Drive, Leasowe, CH46 2QF (the former Leasowe Nursery School site)

Leasowe Nursery School and Adult Learning Centre is relocating to co-locate with Castleway Primary School following a governor-led federation. From January 2023 the former nursery school site will be open for alternative usage as a satellite site for The Observatory School. The existing and proposed sites are closely located. The driving distance between the two sites is 2.3 miles, the walking distance is 1.4 miles.

This is specialist provision and there should not be any impact on other educational institutions locally. Young people attending specialist schools generally attend via assisted minibus type transport rather than individual vehicles and there should not be any increase in traffic as a result.

Admission to the School will remain via an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The satellite site is expected to accommodate the majority of the younger pupils on roll at the school, that is, those in Key Stage 2 and Lower KS3. Staff employed by the School may be required to work across both sites. Whilst the satellite site would facilitate the School in delivering education to young people - it is not linked to the other proposals in this notice.

Within four weeks of the date of publication of this notice, any person may object to, comment on or make representations regarding these proposals by submitting an email to [schoolsconsultation@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsconsultation@wirral.gov.uk) – please put "Observatory Comment" in the subject; or by post to:

Schools Consultation, Wirral Council, PO BOX 290, Brighton Street, Wallasey, CH27 9FQ



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All comments, objections and representations must be received by 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022 . The Council will then take all views into consideration and make a determination regarding the proposals within 2 months. If the Council does not make a determination within 2 months, the decision will be made by the Schools Adjudicator.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Simon White".

Director for Children, Families and Education

Published this day, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022

**Wirral Council - Consultation on changes to The Observatory School**

Wirral Council is proposing to make some changes to The Observatory School. This is a mixed community special school for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH).

This includes changing the lower age limit of the School from 11 years to 8 years. The current age range is 11 to 16. The proposed age range is 8 to 16. A pilot scheme for children in Year 5 and Year 6 has been running since April 2018 and has proved successful. The intention is to allow the school to offer places to all Key Stage 2 year groups in the future if there is a need.

Linked to this is a proposal to formally increase the number of places the School offers from 76 places to 100 places. The School has already been operating with 100 or more pupils on roll including the Key Stage 2 pilot base and this will not be a significant change affecting any other school.

The Council is also consulting on expanding the school onto an additional "satellite" site to be located at Twickenham Drive, Leasowe, CH46 2QF (the former Leasowe Nursery School site) after January 2023 when the nursery school moves to co-locate with Castleway Primary School. The main and proposed satellite site are closely located, with a walking distance of 1.4 miles.

This is specialist provision and there should not be any impact on other educational institutions locally. Young people attending specialist schools generally attend via assisted minibus type transport rather than individual vehicles and there should not be any increase in traffic as a result.

Admission to the School will remain via an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The satellite site is expected to accommodate the majority of the younger pupils on roll at the school, that is, those in Key Stage 2 and Lower KS3. Staff employed by the School may be required to work across both sites.

**How to respond**

If you would like to make a comment of support or objection, a four week representation period starts on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022 and ends at 5pm on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2022. A formal public notice has been issued at the school and in the local area.

Responses must be in writing and can be sent to [schoolsconsultation@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:schoolsconsultation@wirral.gov.uk) (please put "Observatory Comment" in the subject header, or by post to:

Admissions and Place Planning  
Wirral Council  
PO Box 290  
Brighton Street  
Wallasey  
CH27 9FQ

**What happens next**

At the end of the 4 week period, the Local Authority will consider evidence including any responses received. The Council's Decision Maker will decide whether or not to proceed with the proposal.