

## **WIRRAL COUNCIL**

### **SCHOOLS FORUM – 19<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2024**

#### **REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND EDUCATION**

#### **SPECIAL SCHOOLS – PROPOSED CHANGE TO ADMISSION NUMBERS**

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### **1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Over the last two academic years several special schools have supported the local area by agreeing to expansion, this is due to the increased number of young people with an EHCP and needing specialist provision.
- 1.2 During the academic years, 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 the following schools have admitted additional pupil about the agreed capacity numbers – Elleray Park School, Meadowside School, Stanley School, Foxfield School, Hayfield School, Claremount School, Orrets Meadow School and The Observatory School.

### **2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 In relation to Elleray Park School, it now operates across a split site model with an additional site in the former Pensby Children's Centre. In September 2021 it was agreed to increase the school admission number to 187. Since that time the school has grown further, and the admission number needs to be now 210 based on current numbers. Elleray Park School support young people with complete learning difficulties, due to the continued shift in demand for this provision the correct number of pupils need to be funded to receive the highest quality of education and resources they require in order that their needs can be met successfully. Elleray Park has reached max capacity across its two sites.
- 2.2 In relation to Stanley School, the school currently has a net capacity of 120. Stanely school was able to take an additional cohort of pupils and currently has 150 pupils on roll, this was supported by using an additional classroom across the Pensby/Stanley site. The school will be supporting the local area by taking an additional 20 pupils in September 2023, and therefore will have a net capacity of 170 pupils. Stanley School also supports young people with complex needs and the demand in provision of this type has continued.
- 2.3 The increased pupil numbers in primary complex needs is now starting to filter into the secondary system. Foxfield School currently has a pupil number of 172 matching is net capacity. This will increase over the next 3 years with an expectation pupils will increase by 60. To support this additional space is being created at the Foxfield site over the next 3 years. To support this the admission number for September needs to increase to 195 pupils. Further increases will be brought to school's forum as required. Foxfield School is currently working a split site model with additional space being utilised at the CLC at the new Claremount School site.

- 2.4 Meadowside School has also seen a similar increase in pressure for places to meet the needs of complex young people across Wirral. The LA supported the school with demountable classroom on the Meadowside site during 2022-2023 academic year. The school has a net capacity of 75 and this needs to be increased to 100 based on the current cohort that can be accommodated at the school site. Meadowside School has reached max capacity and cannot be expanded any further.
- 2.5 The Observatory School is just in the final stages of finishing a capital programme at the former Leasowe Maintained Nursery School. In November 2023, Wirral Council Children's Committee agreed to the significant change to allow The Observatory School to expand its age range to KS2, following a previous pilot that was agreed. The school will operate on a 160-admission number, following the agreement of the capacity of 100 agreed at the same committee. The Observatory School meets the needs of young people SEMH profiles. The Observatory school will be at max capacity following this additional site.
- 2.6 Hayfield School supported the local areas by taking a significant increase in pupils at the start of the academic year 2022-2023. This was supported by a capital programme to install 6 mobile classrooms; this has been very successful, and the provision created has really supported the school with this additional pupil requirement. The net capacity of the school has increased from 100 to 160 pupils now on roll. The school caters for the needs of young people with ASC. Hayfield School is now at max capacity.
- 2.7 Claremount School continues a popular school to support the needs of young people with ASC. In September 2021 the pupil number was increased from 226 to 249. Since then, the school has moved sites, to the former Kingsway High School, this has been hugely successful with the school receiving the support required to adapt the facilities to meet the needs of the young people that attend. The demand seen in September 2021 has continued for the following two academic years and it is expected to continue for the next academic year. The school currently has 360 pupils on roll, and this is expected to rise to 400 pupils in September 2024. The new site has the space required to accommodate this additional demand. It is important to note the school will reach saturation point within the next two years. Claremount School meets the needs of young people with ASC.
- 2.8 Orrets Meadow has been able to expand through this academic year and the next academic year by the utilisation of space at the neighbouring Sandbrook Primary School. The school will be able to utilise two classrooms at the start of the next academic year allowing 20 additional places. The school meets the needs of young people with ASC and the admission number needs to increase from the previous 72 to 92. Orrets Meadow will then be at max capacity on its current footprint.
- 2.9 As per the DBV outline our maintained special school system is reaching saturation point. The 8 schools outlined here, 6 of them are reaching saturation point with no further expansion available. Additional provision for young people with an EHCP will be needed to be delivered by significant expansion of resourced provision in the mainstream system.

2.10 The outlined increased in admission numbers were fully costed as part of the DBV review programme and have been considered as part of the DSG management place and included in the budget projections.

### 3.0 Summary of admission number changes

School	Current admission number	Current number on roll	Admission number September 2024
Stanley School	120	151	170
Elleray Park School	187	212	210
Foxfield School	174	172	192
Meadowside School	75	104	100
The Observatory School	100	146	160
Hayfield School	100	161	160
Orrets Meadow School	72	83	92
Claremount School	249	364	400

### 4.0 Conclusion

4.1 To meet the needs of the increased demand in pupils with an EHCP requiring an EHCP the special school system has supported the Wirral local area demand and this needs to be reflected in the admission number so the school can access all appropriate funding.

4.2 It is important to not the significant increase in the number of places within special schools will be challenging moving forward as the reach saturation point. Additional resourced provision will need to be created in mainstream provision, DBV estimated a need of circa 500 places across the primary and secondary phases. This will reduce the proportion of Wirral children with an EHCP attending a special school and reflect a closer figure to the national average proportions.

### 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 That the Forum notes the report and increased demand on specialist provision

6.2 Forum supports the increased admission numbers for the special schools outlined in the report

**Simone White**  
**Director for Children, Families and Education**