

# Primary SEMH Provision: Public Meeting

## Tuesday 27 September 2022 6:30 – 7:30pm

### Kennet Valley School Hall

## Minutes

### Present from Kennet Valley School and West Berkshire Council:

Deirdre Devine—Headteacher of Kennet Valley School

Michael Harris—Deputy Head of Kennet Valley School

Sharon Goddard—Chair of Governors at Kennet Valley School

Jane Seymour—Service Manager, SEN & Disabled Children's Service at West Berkshire Council

Richard Turner—Service Manager for Finance and Property at West Berkshire Council

Jack Caine—SEND Strategy Officer at West Berkshire Council

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

Deirdre Devine (DD) opened the meeting and welcomed members of the public attending. This provision is an exciting opportunity for Kennet Valley School and we're pleased to be here to discuss it. She introduced Jane Seymour (JS) as chair.

Jane Seymour (JS) introduced the new provision as a key aspect of the West Berkshire SEND Strategy which is intended to provide educational places for children with Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) needs. There are not enough educational places maintained by the local authority for children with these needs. As a result, many of these children are placed in independent or non-maintained places outside of the local area. In September, a local educational setting for secondary aged children with these needs was opened on the site of the old Theale Primary School. This setting is run by The Castle School and is called The Castle @ Theale.

Those present at the meeting were provided with a handout summarising the responses to questions submitted in advance of the meeting. Meeting agreed to proceed directly to questions.



## 2. Questions

- Will this setting provide for all children with SEND?

JS—this setting is intended to provide for children with SEMH needs. These are children who require specialist provision as a result of their needs. Children in the target cohort do not have a learning disability and don't require provision in a special school for children with learning difficulties. These children will not typically have been excluded from previous settings and their behaviours aren't a result of seeking not to conform. They will often have a diagnosis of Autism and are likely to become very anxious within traditional classroom environments.

- How will you keep people updated about development of this setting including the design? Will some stakeholders be notified directly?

Jack Caine (JC)—we will minute this meeting and provide a summary of our answers to questions which have been pre-submitted. A summary of the responses to the overall consultation will also be shared via the consultation and engagement hub. We have committed to updating stakeholders about the proposed design when this is further along. A list of key stakeholders, including local parish councils, were notified of this consultation and we are happy to share future updates directly with this group of stakeholders.

- Will school opening hours for this setting and the main site be different?

JS—there are no current plans to stagger school opening hours for the main school and new unit. However, DD could review this if it was felt to be beneficial to the overall school population.

- Will children be transported to school?

JS—in most cases yes, unless for example, the child lives very locally. However, children will be grouped together in transport as far as possible in order to minimise the number of vehicles. It is not possible to say how many vehicles will bring the children to school as the extent to which they can share taxis and minibuses depends on where they live, but the principle is that transport will be shared as much as possible.

- Will any traffic calming measures be introduced outside of the school as a result of these proposals?

Richard Turner (RT)—this proposal will be looked at by the highways team at the council as a consultee during the planning process, to decide if these are required. If there are some concerns about the speed of cars because of current traffic levels then this should be raised by the school with the highways team separately from the project.

- We are concerned that some aspects of the natural environment could be damaged by these proposals. Some parts of the field provide a home for foxes and bats. Will this be affected by the proposals and how will it be

protected? Also, will the building be designed to minimise environmental impact?

RT—it is very likely that this setting will need to be built to a minimum environmental standard (BREEAM) as a condition of its planning approval. This may include the use of air source heat pumps or solar panels. We can't confirm what specific provisions will be made at this stage as we are so early in proposed development.

This development is unlikely to interfere with parts of the field which provide a habitat for bats and foxes. Any impact upon the habitats of local animals would be considered as part of the planning approval process. We will look to minimise this as much as possible. We will be required to bring in external specialist to review the potential impact on natural wildlife such as bats.

- What are the next steps for approval and for planning?

JS—further planning of this facility is subject to a review of the outcome of this consultation. JC—the local authority is the decision making body in this instance. We will present a summary of this consultation to the council's Operations Board. It will then pass to the Head of Education for a final decision. This is known as a delegated officer decision and it will be formally recorded on the council's forward plan and on the consultation and engagement hub page.

RT—planning approval will be needed for this project and an application will be made to the council's planning team for this. In addition, a Section 77 application will need to be made to the Department for Education seeking approval for development of a part of the school playing field. We have assumed that approval is relatively likely given the above average size of the school playing field. A projected opening date of January 2024 takes the likely timescales for approval into account.

- Has funding for the project been agreed?

RT—funding has been identified in the Council's capital programme. JS—revenue funding for the day to day running of the provision including employment of staff has not yet been agreed. This will be considered by a body called the Schools Forum and a decision would be made by March 2023 if a decision is made that this development will proceed

- Has design work already started and will this be done by staff in WBC?

RT—no design work has yet been done. West Berkshire Council does not have in house architects so this would be put out to tender and architects engaged. A brief for the project would be developed on which the design would be based. JS—the brief would be developed by the Education Service and the school in partnership

- What are the potential benefits for Kennet Valley School?

DD—we have been recognised for our good quality SEND provision. This is a great opportunity for the school to develop more specialist expertise and facilities. This will provide educational places for a vulnerable group of children but it will also benefit the whole school community who will be able to utilise the new expertise within

school. We hope that this new provision will raise the profile of Kennet Valley and help us to recruit strongly across the whole school.

- What will the footprint of the building look like? Will it extend over two floors?

RT—until the design process is completed it is difficult to say what the footprint of the building will be. Similar projects haven't generally extended over multiple floors as this increases the project costs and can make aspects of the building less accessible.

JS – the consultation document sets out the facilities which will be needed in the building, including two classrooms, a practical teaching space, a social area and offices for staff. This gives a rough idea of the likely footprint.

### **3. Meeting close**

JS thanked those who had joined the meeting and encouraged those attending to complete the online survey to share their views. DD thanked all attendees for joining the meeting.