

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

THE EXECUTIVE

5 November 2024

PROPOSAL TO INCREASE PUPIL NUMBERS AT SPRINGWATER SCHOOL, STARBECK

Report by the Corporate Director – Children and Young People’s Service

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report details the outcomes of the public consultation carried out by the Council on the proposal to permanently increase pupil numbers at Springwater School, Starbeck from 1 September 2025, and asks the Executive (or the Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills if there are no objections during the representation period) to authorise the publication of proposals and statutory notices, and to schedule taking a final decision on the proposal on 7 January 2025.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2.1 On 3 September, the Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills approved consultation on a proposal to permanently increase pupil numbers at Springwater School, Starbeck from 1 September 2025. The consultation period ran from 6 September 2024 to 11 October 2024.

2.2 This report details the responses to this consultation and asks the Executive to authorise the publication of statutory proposals and notices (Appendix 1), and to schedule taking a final decision on the proposal on 7 January 2025. If approved, numbers would be permanently increased at the school from 112 places to 157 and this would be implemented from 1 September 2025.

2.3 The report is supported by a number of Appendices as listed below:

Appendix 1: Full draft Statutory Proposals and draft Statutory Notice

Appendix 2: Published Consultation Paper

Appendix 3: List of the Consultees

Appendix 4: Note of the Stakeholder event

Appendix 5: Consultation responses

Appendix 6: Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 7: Climate change Impact Assessment

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 Springwater School is a community special school in Starbeck near Harrogate serving children from 2 to 19 years. The school have provided 112 school places during the academic year 2023/24.

- 3.2 North Yorkshire Council has a duty to keep its special education provision under review and ensure there is the right type of provision and enough places to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 3.3 The Council have developed a specific SEND Capital Investment Programme which aims to increase the availability of specialist places. This will be achieved through expansion of existing special schools, the building of new special schools and investment in mainstream SEN resource bases, known locally as Targeted Mainstream Provisions.
- 3.4 There has been an increase in the number of children with EHCPs (Education Health and Care Plans) in North Yorkshire, by 95% since 2018 from 2606 to c.5100. Whilst the majority of children with EHCPs have their needs met in their local mainstream schools, special school places have increased from c.820 in 2018 to c1450 in 2024. The rise in EHCPs and demand for specialist places is forecast to continue on a similar trajectory in future years.
- 3.5 The proposed expansion of Springwater School will help manage some of the school place pressures generated by the increase in the number of EHCPs funded by the Local Authority. It will also provide wider benefits in educating children closer to their local communities and reducing travel time and costs.
- 3.6 In December 2023, the Governing Board of Springwater decided to apply to join the Ascent Academy Trust and subsequently made an application to the Department for Education. The Department has not yet issued an Academy Order for Springwater and it is not anticipated that the school will convert to an academy before this statutory proposal would be determined.

4.0 CONSULTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESPONSES

- 4.1 The consultation period ran from 6 September 2024 to 11 October 2024. A consultation paper setting out the proposal was sent to the staff and parents at the school and also other stakeholders in accordance with the statutory guidance. A copy of the consultation paper is attached as Appendix 2 together with a list of the consultees at Appendix 3.
- 4.2 A stakeholder event meeting held on 2 October 2024 and was attended by a local Member, officers of the Local Authority, the Headteacher and School Governors. A note of that meeting is attached as Appendix 4. This meeting was preceded by a staff meeting on the proposals.
- 4.3 By the closing date of the consultation, on 11 October 2024, 17 consultation responses had been received to the proposals. An additional three respondents did not leave any comments on their on-line form and so their views are not known. The consultation responses received are shown in full at Appendix 5, although with the names of individuals have been removed as appropriate.
- 4.4 The following section of the report provides a summary of the main issues raised during

the consultation, either by the individuals who submitted a response (by post or online).

5.0 ISSUES RAISED AND RESPONSES

- 5.1 The key issues raised during the consultation process are listed below alongside relevant responses from officers in the Council's Children and Young People's Service (CYPS).

Woodfield Special School

- 5.2 A parent was concerned that if this proposal went ahead the proposal for SEN provision at the former Woodfield School site would not go ahead.

Response

- 5.3 Woodfield School is part of the SEND Capital Investment Programme which aims to increase the availability of specialist places and it planned that works will start on site shortly and be ready for September 2025.

Parking

- 5.4 A member of staff and a parent expressed concern about the current parking situation which was not sufficient for the number of staff currently employed at the school and did not feel they had been addressed within the new plans responding to increased pupil numbers at the school. Staff have reported near misses, cars bumped and parking tickets due to the limited parking available at the site. These issues were also raised at the public stakeholder meeting and staff meeting.
- 5.5 One respondent said that the proposed pick up and drop off at the school will not be large enough to allow for the time required to either cajole reluctant pupils or pupils in crisis into and out of cars or the time needed for wheelchairs from Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) and this was a concern.

Response

- 5.6 Access improvements have been considered as part of the of the planned works at the school within an existing constrained site. There will be a dedicated drop off and pickup outside the new main entrance to the school at Starbeck Central to alleviate congestion in the school's main car park. The access road at the side of the Starbeck Central building will become part of the school site and school minibuses could be parked there to further alleviate space in the main school's car park. In addition, three car parking spaces will be provided outside the Starbeck Central building for school use. The public footpath in front of the newly created in-line parking bays remains as does the disabled car parking space located in front of the library.
- 5.7 There are opportunities for drop off and pick up times to be looked at and staggered.

Office and staff meeting room space

- 5.8 A teacher said that additional office space is needed along with space for Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) work. Safe spaces, break-out and

additional/classrooms must also be included within the plans to meet the needs of pupils.

Response

- 5.9 Additional facilities in terms of classrooms, offices and meeting rooms are proposed to be provided at Starbeck Central. These include; five new dedicated classroom spaces Meadowbank will have a new teaching area and breakout space. There will be a new reception/office space, a further office space and four meeting rooms.
- 5.10 There will be a significant improvement in facilities for children educated at the school. The school will grow gradually in numbers and the increase will be phased so the change in pupil numbers will occur over a period of time. School staff will carefully plan transition to the newly provided spaces and prepare children for works to be taking place around the school.

Staffing

- 5.11 One parent said that staffing is an issue at the school and particularly in relation to 1:1 or 1:2 support and this was of concern if the school was expanded further.

Response

- 5.12 Recruitment and retention of specialist teaching staff, Teaching Assistants and leaders is challenging across the sector.
- 5.13 Presently the school have a good record in recruiting and retaining the roles required to provided the specialist support needed. This has been demonstrated in recent years through the gradual increase in places to date. The Council will work with the school to commission places in a phased way so that recruitment of any new staff is able to be planned for.

Condition of existing main school building and space available

- 5.14 A couple of respondents mentioned the existing condition of the main school site and if the facilities in this building will be improved? One parent said that the main school building was 'a hotch potch' and that a new school should have been looked at that would cherish young people. Storage is a huge challenge at the school for equipment which needs to be easily accessible throughout the school day for pupils. Joint secondary and sixth form assemblies and events will be incredibly difficult to arrange due to the size of the existing hall and this is important to encourage a sense of belonging for pupils going into the sixth form.

Response

- 5.15 The proposed expansion at Springwater School is supported by the SEND Capital Programme and was deemed the most effective use of the funds available to the authority. The proposals for expansion at the school represent a significant financial investment from the LA. In terms of future investment at the main Springwater School building. The new facilities will not only provide additional places but also a range of improved facilities to the school and its pupils. These improvements include better

changing facilities, new meeting spaces and larger classrooms.

Special School Nursing Provision and Paediatric Physiotherapy Team

- 5.16 Both NHS Special School Nursing Team and the Paediatric Physiotherapy Teams have raised concerns regarding current staff levels and increase in support required to meet increased numbers at the school within their current resources.

Response

- 5.17 This proposal is with regard to creating space and capacity for children which the Local Partnership have a duty to provide for. By providing additional provision within the Harrogate District this will ensure children do not have to travel greater distances to access special schools across a wider geographic footprint. The benefit of providing places in this way will mean that NHS services can consider the most efficient way to deliver services in line with their statutory duties in partnership with a single school.

Meeting EHCP Requirements

- 5.18 A member of staff said that it was a positive step to offer more places, if these children can be supported at the correct level but expressed concerns meeting EHCP requirements. They added it was good to see a sensory room added or improved on the current one but wanted to know about what aspects of sensory provision would be given in this space and how safety would be overseen. The respondent also said they would like to see sensory needs met from an environmental perspective, not only in a specialist room, but within the whole building.

Response

- 5.19 Within the limitations of the buildings school governors and leaders have worked with the council to consider the best arrangement for provision as possible. This includes the introduction of new spaces and sensory needs have been considered. The day to day safe running of the school is a matter for the school leadership team and governing body of which they have a proven track record.

Contractors Compound and Parking

- 5.20 A member of the community said they approved of the plans as long as the building works do not take over or disrupt the park either side of the school location and building work does not spill over onto the High Street too much.

Response

- 5.21 There will be a contractors compound set up within the current NYC staff parking area at the side of 68A The High Street down the access side road. This will include an area for equipment and materials storage, as well as welfare facilities for construction staff.

More Information about the proposals and building plans

- 5.22 One parent said they still need more information about the proposals and what they mean in the context of the local area as they felt they didn't learn anything new at the public stakeholder meeting.

Response

- 5.23 Whilst this consultation is not about the capital investment scheme it is recognised that parents and school stakeholders will want further information moving forward. At a suitable time the school and council will provide further information on the capital scheme and how this will be managed whilst the school remains operational.

Ascent Academy Trust Response

- 5.24 Ascent Academy Trust responded to the consultation stating that the expansion of places within Springwater is a good plan in terms of reducing out of authority placements and educating children locally. The availability of buildings on or near the site make this a possibility and keeps the young people within the same area. The planned space internally and externally feel fit for purpose whilst not taking away from existing outdoor space. If the new area is to be used for young people with Profound and multiple learning disabilities (PMLD), the provision of storage areas for wheelchairs, standing frames and other large equipment must be provided as this is a current problem within the school. It would be good to ensure that existing provision is upgraded to match the quality of the new provision as some of the classrooms currently do not have sufficient space or storage space for equipment. There are also a number of temporary buildings on the site that are of different ages and bring additional, but limited capacity.

Response

- 5.25 Within Starbeck Central new provision, two wheelchair/equipment stores will be provided both around 30m² in size, these are either located directly opposite or adjacent to a classroom space.
- 5.26 As a LA Maintained School, governors and school leaders have been fully engaged in the design of the associated capital scheme to ensure the best use of space.

Comments supporting the proposal

- 5.27 The majority of responses to the consultation thought the proposal to expand the numbers at the school was a good idea and much needed, responding to the pressure of places for SEN pupils.
- 5.28 One parent said that this was a good change and would allow other children the opportunity to attend a fantastic school. Another parent said they were in support of increasing facilities for local SEND pupils.
- 5.29 Conclusion

Officers acknowledge the comments that have been received in support of the

proposal.

6.0 PROPOSAL

6.1 The proposal is to permanently increase pupil numbers at Springwater School 1 September 2025.

The full statutory proposal is set out in Appendix 1

6.2 The proposed timetable would be:

14 November 2024	Publication of Statutory Proposals
12 December 2024	Closing date for representations (4 weeks as prescribed in regulations and cannot be shortened or lengthened)
7 January 2025	Final decision by Executive
1 September 2025	Proposed date of increase in numbers to 112 to 157.

7.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 School funding

Under Local Management of Schools, schools are responsible for their own budgets. It is for heads and governors to determine at school or federation level how to optimise the use of resources and maximise value for money.

7.2 Capital implications

As part of the Council's Special Educational Needs Capital Investment Programme we have developed detailed proposals that will help us to expand and improve the facilities at the school.

8.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient school places to secure attainment and meet demand in accordance with s.13-14 Education Act 1996.

8.2 The Council has additional, specific duties, in relation to the provision of education for children with special educational needs (SEN) as set out in Part 3 of the Children & Families Act 2014.

8.3 Statutory guidance and legislation sets out the process for making school organisation changes to local-authority-maintained schools.¹ For community special schools like Springwater School, Governing bodies and local authorities may seek to increase the number of places by following a prescribed alterations' statutory process. The Local Authority is the decision maker.

¹ DfE, Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers (January 2023); The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

8.4 In making the proposals the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the Equality Act 2010 and in particular s.149, the Public Sector Equality Duty to ensure the proposals and any impacts they may have on those with protected characteristics are taken into account and mitigated or improved as a result of the design of the proposals.

9.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no Human Rights issues in relation to this decision.

10.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in respect of this proposal and is attached (Appendix 6).

11.0 NEXT STEPS

11.1 It is proposed to publish proposals and statutory notices on 14 November 2024. The proposals would be published on the Council's website and the statutory notice would be published in a local newspaper and displayed at the main entrances to the school. These would provide four weeks for representations to be made to the Council, by 12 December 2024.

11.2 The Executive agreed a model for decision-making on school organisation proposals on 25 September 2007. If approval is given to publish statutory proposals and notices, it is proposed that a final decision is taken by the Executive on 7 January 2025.

12.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 12.1
- i) Statutory proposals and notices be published on 14 November 2024 proposing to permanently increase the number of places Springwater School, Starbeck can offer to pupils from 122 to 157, with effect from 1 September 2025.
 - ii) The Executive (or the Executive Member for Education, Learning and Skills if there are no objections during the representation period) schedule taking a final decision on these proposals on 7 January 2025.

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List of Appendices

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