

Consultation on changes to provision at the Melrose Centre and Southlands School - Questions and Answers

What is an ARP?

Q: What is an Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) – sometimes known as a Specially Resourced Provision (SRP)?

A: An ARP/SRP is a provision, within a mainstream school, that provides additional, targeted support and resources for children with long-term special educational needs (SEN). Pupils typically attend the ARP for individual support and/or to learn a specific skill and will often be taught by specialist teachers. Most of their time (usually well over 50% of their timetable) will be spent in mainstream classes with their peers.

The link here is to the Department for Education's website (Bulletin 104, page 8) and describes the various types of educational settings for children with SEND:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/719176/Building_Bulletin_104_Area_guidelines_for_SEND_and_alternative_provision.pdf

What is the rationale for change?

Q: What is the reason for this change? Whose idea is this?

A: The Melrose Centre was established in 2009, as an Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) for children with autism as part of Longbenton High School. Since then the number of children with autism has increased significantly and the demand for places in the Melrose Centre is now much greater than the number of places available. Alongside that, the overall level and complexity of need of the children accessing Melrose has also increased significantly over time.

Both factors have led to the decision that a change is needed to reflect the specialist secondary offer that is now provided at the Melrose Centre and to increase overall capacity beyond the Melrose Centre. The Authority is supportive of this position and is working in partnership with Longbenton High School and Southlands School to propose that the Melrose Centre will benefit from special school leadership as part of Southlands School.

We know that the Melrose Centre is a very highly regarded provision for children with autism and this is recognised by everyone involved. Our overriding intention is to maintain what is working well in terms of access and inclusion but to enhance the education offer further through the specialist leadership and expertise of Southlands School. This proposal provides an opportunity for Southland School to clarify its offer to better reflect the changing profile of children's need.

Q: Why change the management at Melrose if it's been successful for ten years?

A: The ARP model, upon which the Melrose was based, is no longer appropriate to meet the increasing needs of the vast majority of children as determined in their Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Longbenton High School is no longer in a position to meet both the increasing demand for places in the Melrose Centre and the overall

increase in the needs of the children accessing Melrose. The Melrose has become, in effect, a specialist offer and it is now right to consider a special school to take on the leadership and management of the centre.

Q: Why does it need a special school to run Melrose, isn't it supposed to be mainstream education?

A: The overall needs of the children coming to Melrose are frequently more complex and that means having a special school running Melrose would bring additional expertise which will ensure the education offer continues to improve and meet children's needs. The vast majority of children access most of their teaching and learning within the Melrose Centre rather than the wider school. Children would continue to have access to the wider facilities available at Longbenton High as they do currently.

Q: Why Southlands? What expertise does Southlands have around autism?

A: The Headteacher at Southlands has an extensive background in supporting children, young people and adults with autism. This includes senior roles in education and post-16 college provision and also in residential care. The current staff team in Southlands also has expertise in supporting children with autism, a number of whom are already being educated at Southlands. This will be further enhanced through established links and joint working with the Melrose staff team.

Q: Has the proposal been considered in light of the wider picture of children's needs? For example, are you also working with Norham ARP? Are you making changes elsewhere?

A: The proposal has been developed following dialogue with the schools and after consideration of the wider educational provision for children with SEND in North Tyneside. For example, there has already been an expansion of special school places at Beacon Hill School and Silverdale School for the start of this academic year.

As part of our wider review of SEND provision and ARPs the Authority is also working with the new leadership team at Norham High School. The Norham Communication Resource Base ARP is for children with language and communication difficulties, many of whom are able to access the wider curriculum at the school. There are no changes planned to Norham ARP as part of these proposals.

Q: Can the successful approach at Melrose be rolled out at other mainstream schools?

A: Work is underway to consider all of the Additionally Resourced Provisions in mainstream schools and how they may be able to better meet the needs of children in mainstream settings, including those with autism.

Q: How would the proposal create more school places for children with autism?

A: The space at the Melrose Centre is fully occupied and more secondary school places are needed for children with autism. In addition to the places at the Melrose Centre, Southlands School would increasingly offer places to children with autism at the main Southlands School site. To allow for the gradual expansion of autism places, this will mean new placements for children with a primary need of Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) will not be placed

in Southlands. This would enable Southlands School to increase capacity in the system through a sustainable and incremental approach.

Q: It's not clear why the change proposed is needed. If the Melrose Centre is getting more stretched and more autism provision is needed, can more staff be employed to meet the need?

A: The physical space at the Melrose Centre is limited. It was built to accommodate 25 pupils but the numbers of pupils has significantly exceeded the places available this year. We also know that demand for autism places is projected to increase further in future years. Increasing the staffing at Melrose would therefore not enable additional places to be created. The overall needs of the pupils now attending Melrose are such that the leadership of a special school, with expertise in supporting children with autism, is needed to manage the centre and take it forward in the future.

What are the implications for children?

Q: Is the Melrose Centre going to stay at Longbenton or is this just the start of moving it to Southlands?

A: There are no plans to move the Melrose Centre to Southlands. Longbenton High School is committed to the Melrose Centre remaining on the existing school site and for children to benefit from the facilities of the wider school.

Q: Who would the Head of the Melrose Centre report to and where would they discuss any changes required to the operation of the centre on an ongoing basis?

A: The Head of Melrose Centre would report to the Headteacher of Southlands School. Operational arrangements would be agreed between the Headteachers of Southlands and Longbenton High. This would cover policies around inclusion and access, safeguarding and behaviour with the clear aim of maintaining the current opportunities for integration at Longbenton High School.

Q: My child is at Melrose now. What impact will this change have on them?

A: From your child's perspective things would continue in the same way. Our overriding intention is to minimise any disruption to your child's education or changes to the structure of your child's day at school. Children at the Melrose Centre would continue their education at Melrose and the existing staff team would continue to support them but under the leadership of Southlands School.

Q: Will there be a new uniform for children now at Melrose?

A: The issue of uniforms is still being considered. No decision has been taken yet on any changes to uniforms. If there are changes proposed these may be considered at the appropriate School Council.

Q: My child is at Melrose. Would the change mean my child needs to move school?

A: Your child would continue to be educated at the Melrose Centre located at Longbenton High School. Should the change go ahead it would be very important to minimise any disruption to your child's education and we would make this a top priority in

managing the change. If there is a significant change of need for any child then this would be considered through the EHCP annual review process as currently happens.

Q: Would pupils who are now at Melrose be required to move to the Southlands School site or would they need to travel by mini-bus between the two sites?

A: Pupils currently at Melrose would not need to move to the Southlands School site. If pupils at the Melrose Centre wished to participate in opportunities at the main Southlands school site, and this was judged to be appropriate and in line with their Education Health and Care Plan, then there would be opportunities to do so.

Q: Will children at Melrose be taught by chronological age or by ability?

A: Our priority will be to meet children's individual needs as per their education, health and care plan. In terms of future arrangements, wherever possible, the preference will be to educate children in the same key stage for their age.

Q: Will there be different teachers teaching my child?

A: There is no intention to change or move the current staff team at Melrose. We want the current staff to continue to teach your child. In addition, there will be opportunities for joint training and development between staff teams to share expertise and build capacity to improve children's education.

Q: Will the students at Melrose be able to access the mainstream curriculum at Longbenton for GCSEs?

A: Students at Melrose who would benefit from the mainstream curriculum at Longbenton would continue to access it, as is the case now. Students will still be able to sit GCSE examinations if that is the appropriate curriculum for them.

Q: Will there be sixth form provision?

A: Pupils at the Melrose Centre who would benefit from the sixth form at Longbenton High School would continue to be able to access it. The priority will be to ensure that the post-16 provision for children with autism is enhanced to offer a suitable range of opportunities and a distinct progression from what was available in Key Stage 4.

Q: What are the options for post-16?

A: A range of current provision is in place for young people moving into post-16 education or training. Information can be found on the Local Offer website under the 'Preparing for Adulthood' section and young people can get advice on their options through the Connexions service. We will continue to explore opportunities to extend and improve the post-16 offer in terms of academic and vocational pathways, working in partnership with schools, colleges and training providers.

Q: Can the post-16 offer from South Tyneside be replicated for North Tyneside for years 12 and 13? Will there be innovative post-16 provision?

A: The post-16 offer would be developed to enhance the options available, this would include considering good practice from elsewhere and whether it could be replicated in North Tyneside.

Q: My child is at Benton Dene. What effect will this have on Year 6 transition timescales? How/what school do we name for year 7 to have the process completed by 15th February if the final decision on these proposals is March/April?

A: As discussed in the parent consultation sessions, the final decisions on these proposals are unlikely to be made before March/April 2020. Your SEND Officer will support you throughout the transition period and we will seek to confirm the offer of education place as soon as possible. You will also be able to access impartial information and advice from SENDIASS. Contact details are included in the section below.

Q: My child is at Benton Dene. How will it be determined which children would be on the Southlands main site and which children would be on the Melrose site?

A: All children in transition will be considered individually in terms of their educational and wider needs and the extent to which they would benefit from the curriculum and wider support offer at each school site.

Over time, the vision is for new children who would benefit from an entry level or level 1 curriculum and access to vocational and community based pathways to be based at Southlands main school site.

The intention is for new children to be placed in Melrose who would benefit from a more inclusive mainstream offer and an academic curriculum with routes into GCSEs.

Q: Will there be opportunities to get the children involved and consult them?

A: How and when children could potentially be engaged are being discussed with the Authority's Participation and Engagement Team and with schools. This would be considered sensitively alongside the wishes of parents and as part of the next phase of any formal consultation as appropriate.

What are the implications for Southlands School

Q: Can you tell me about Southlands School?

A: Southlands School is a Foundation Special School in North Tyneside, for pupils aged 11 to 16. The school currently caters for children with Moderate Learning Difficulties as well as children with Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs. You can find the schools' website [here](#).

Q: Where will the children with moderate learning difficulties who usually attend Southlands go in the future?

A: Southlands would continue to be a school for children with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). The proposal is to also include children with autism to the formal designation of the school to allow for an increase in the number of children with autism.

The need for special school places or ARP places for children with MLD has reduced over time and many children are now in mainstream schools. The proportion of new children with MLD who start or transfer in-year to Southlands will reduce to allow for the increase in children with autism.

Q: Will there be capital investment at Southlands to make it a safe environment for children?

A: Any adaptations or other work needed to Southlands to create a safe and supportive environment for pupils with autism would be fully resourced and completed before September 2020.

Q: If there is capital investment at Southlands, why can't you use that investment to create an autism specific school?

A: We do not have capital funding available to build a new school. Our priority is to invest in the existing school estate. If there are opportunities to increase places at Southlands by adapting or developing the school facilities these will be explored.

Q: Why couldn't the increasing numbers have been factored into the plan when Longbenton High was built and a bigger area created?

A: When the Melrose Centre was originally established, 25 places was judged to be the appropriate capacity required. The funding available for the new build Longbenton High School did not allow for an expansion of the Melrose Centre.

What is the process being followed? Who makes the final decision on these proposals?

Q: What information has been shared with parents? What is the process being followed?

A: An initial consultation exercise is taking place with parents and carers. A number of consultation meetings have been held with parents and the slides from these sessions are available on the Local Offer:

<https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1385/engagement>

This first phase of consultation runs until 13 December 2019. Following the consultation, a summary of findings will be prepared and a decision taken in the New Year about whether or not to proceed to the next phase of statutory consultation. We will ensure parents are informed about next steps in the process.

Q: When would the change happen?

A: It is proposed that the change would take effect for the start of the new academic year in September 2020.

Q: Who makes the decision about whether this goes ahead?

A: Both school governing bodies will need to approve the changes. There would then need to be a Council decision about whether to proceed to a statutory second phase of consultation in the New Year. Subsequent to that, a final Council decision would be taken to either approve the changes or not.

Who can I speak to about this?

Q: I want to talk to somebody about this – who do I talk to?

A: You can discuss your child's Education Health and Care Plan or any related issues with the SEN Support Service on 0191 643 8684.

You can also get impartial information and advice from the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS). SENDIASS is a specialist service that can help and guide you in all aspects of special educational needs. Contact Details: Amanda Durrant or Nicola Gregg tel (0191) 643 8313 or (0191) 643 8317 or email: SENDIASS@northtyneside.gov.uk

You may also want to contact the North Tyneside Parent Carer Forum – tel (0191) 406 0018 or e-mail: info@ntpcf.co.uk

Q: How do I make sure my views are officially logged?

A: You can send your comments, feedback and questions in writing to commissioning@northtyneside.gov.uk

Q: Will there be further opportunities to share my views?

A: Following the initial consultation phase there will be a decision around whether to proceed with a second formal consultation in the New Year.

Q: How will decisions be communicated and to whom?

A: Parents will be written to and information will also be posted on the Local Offer website: <https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1385/engagement>

The proposals have also been shared with the school staff involved who will be fully consulted around the implications of any change. Other key partners such as the Parent Carer Forum, other schools and services will have information shared with them in terms of the next steps in the process and regarding the final decisions.