

# **Abridged Stage One Pre-publication Consultation Summary – Feedback on a proposal to open an Integrated Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) Provision at Hermitage Primary School.**

Report Author: Dr Helen Jenner

This report has been abridged so that only those elements relevant to the prescribed alterations being considered at Cabinet are included.

**9<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

This is an abridged report following a Stage 1 (pre-publication) consultation process on the possible enlargement of the school and the opening of a Specialist Resource Provision at Hermitage School. The report includes responses that were particularly linked to the proposal to make prescribed alterations at Hermitage School so that up to 12 pupils with ASC needs can be included at Hermitage.

The full report was presented to Cabinet on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021

## **1. The Proposal**

A review, and full consultation of, the Local Authority Special Educational Needs Strategy, recommended moving to different models of provision, which would better support academic attainment, and the inclusion of children in mainstream provision, whenever possible. The strategy particularly recommends improvements in links to quality mainstream provision, access to the full primary curriculum and a strategic approach which fully includes children with autistic spectrum conditions whose capacity to access the curriculum is in line with their age.

At present there is no in-Borough specialist provision for these children, sometimes describes as “high functioning” children with ASC needs.

Schools were invited to submit expressions of interest to run this provision in Summer 2020. The Local Authority met with interested parties in December 2020 and accepted a proposal from Hermitage School to provide a Specialist Resourced Provision – Autistic Spectrum Conditions (SRP-ASC) for 12 pupils placed on the Hermitage School roll. Governance will be through a Steering Group consisting of representatives from the school governing body and at least one LA officer, the Steering Group will report back to Hermitage School Governing Body.

Governors and Senior leaders at Hermitage School have been refining plans since December 2020 and have now reached broad agreement with the Local Authority on a Service Level Agreement.

As well as holding Governing Body and Staff meetings they have held a pre-publication (Stage One) consultation before recommending a move to statutory notices to make the necessary prescribed alterations to their school.

## **2. Report Summary**

This report provides a summary of the Stage 1 pre-consultation responses to prescribed alterations at Hermitage School. The responses were strongly positive overall for the change to include a Specialist Resourced Provision for Autistic Spectrum Conditions (SRP-ASC) and overall positive for the expansion of the school.

The report has been compiled by Dr Helen Jenner, an independent consultant. As well as summarising responses the report also makes suggestions on next steps for the school staff, governors and Local Authority (LA) to consider, to ensure they are responding to any concerns, issues and ideas raised by respondents. Copies of written responses received are available at the school and should be retained for 12 months.

## **3. Stage One : Pre-Statutory notice activities**

The consultation document was agreed with governors, produced and shared with staff, parents and other stakeholders for Hermitage School.

Comments and feedback on the documents and proposal were invited between 22<sup>nd</sup> February and 19<sup>th</sup> March 2021.

The document detailed the following opportunities for staff, parents and carers, and other stakeholders, to share their views.

1. Stakeholders were invited to record their views which could be posted to the school, hand delivered or emailed to the school.
2. A google response platform was set up for people to respond to the consultation electronically.
3. Two zoom meetings were held on March 18<sup>th</sup>, at 11 am and 5 pm.
4. Governors have fully discussed the proposals at governing body meetings and reviewed the consultation outcomes at their meeting on 23rd March 2021. They have established a Steering Group which meets monthly to review the developments.
5. The Stage One Consultation Document was circulated to Tower Hamlets Headteachers, governors and other stakeholders.

## **4. Responses received**

### **4.1 The Feedback and Responses Summary Document**

Responses regarding the new integrated provision for ASC needs were very positive.

They mainly fell under 5 themes – the opportunity to provide more children with access to the current high quality provision at Hermitage; concerns to ensure sufficient space without loss of playground space; the opportunity to provide access

for more children with ASC needs to inclusive, in Borough provision; concerns to ensure the school is appropriately funded; awareness of change management risks;

Individual responses to respondents will not be provided because queries raised through Google Forms were all anonymous. If any individual would like further information regarding the points they raised, please contact the school.

## **4.2 Google Forms Responses Summary**

As part of the consultation process Governors set up a Google Forms platform to invite online responses.

60 Responses were received

### Overall Views

Positive 48.      Negative 7.      Not clear 5

### Points of support

Great to increase access to Hermitage

Great to build on expertise

All children should have the chance to be included

More Autism Spectrum Condition provision needed

More resources

Increased expertise and professional development opportunities

Ensure neediest children get high quality teaching

### Concerns

Space

Funding and resources

Risk of impact on quality of teaching

Will SRP-ASC take up mainstream places

Possible impact on quality of teaching

Will there be professional development for staff

## **4.3 Zoom Meetings**

Due to Coronavirus, it was not possible to hold face to face consultation meetings.

However, Governors set up two zoom meetings and links were sent to stakeholders.

These two meetings were extremely positive regarding the SRP- ASC provision, and where there were concerns raised these tended to relate to space issues if the school expands.

### **11am 18<sup>th</sup> March**

**Attended by Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Independent Consultant, 1 staff member (note taker) 3 parents (one of who is also a staff member)**

Key points raised

- Is there sufficient space
- Will class sizes increase
- Will we lose playground space
- Will parents' views be taken into account?
- Who makes the final decision?

### **5pm 18<sup>th</sup> March**

**Attended by Headteacher, Chair of Governors, Independent Consultant, 11 staff (1 as note taker), 3 Parents ( 1 of whom is also a teacher – counted as both)**

Key points raised

- Exciting project recognising Hermitage School strengths
- Will there be sufficient space
- Exciting for staff, real development opportunities
- Will funding be sufficient
- How will the SRP-ASC work
- Will staff be able to feed into the design

## **4.5 Summary of Key Issues raised during the Stage One consultation.**

Parents, staff and governors from Hermitage School raised the following points:

- They were excited by the proposal, and the opportunities it brings to support the Tower Hamlets community, and provide staff development and additional

expertise at the existing provision,

- Respondents from all groups are concerned to ensure:

That the level of funding per child is sufficient to ensure success;

That funding and advice and development for the new provision should not be at the detriment of existing outstanding provision at the school;

That funding should be available from September 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 to ensure a strong start for the provision

That playground space should not be lost because of new provisions

That building work should be completed to ensure appropriate spaces are available to meet the needs of the SRP-ASC children, whilst maintaining learning and health and safety throughout the school.

That the provision should maintain the outstanding inclusive educational approach of the school.

- Staff raised concerns that the enrolment of any new pupils would be staggered so that their transition could be well supported, and they could be properly helped to understand the expectations, values and vision at Hermitage School.
- Staff were concerned to ensure staff development and support and welcomed the new opportunities change would bring.

## **5. Overall Recommendation**

Responses show that plans for the SRP-ASC are positive and appropriate.

Governors at Hermitage School met on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March. They considered feedback from the Google Response Form and meetings, and an earlier draft of this report.

They agreed, in principle, with the Draft Service Level Agreement for the Specialist Resource Autistic Spectrum Condition Provision (SRP-ASC) and are extremely positive about the opportunity to develop a world class provision building on existing expertise.

They recommended moving to the Stage 2 consultation, the publication of a Statutory Notice.

Governors agreed they would consider any representations received in response to the Statutory Notice before making their recommendation to the Local Authority on its decision whether (or not) to approve the prescribed alterations at the Council's July Cabinet meeting.

## **6. Next Steps**

The Statutory Notices are necessary because Hermitage School will need to make

“prescribed alterations” if they are to deliver the SRP-ASC. They should now include the proposal to also alter the size of the school.

The Statutory Notice should be published for a 4 week period, and responses to them should be included in a Statutory Notice feedback report, alongside this Stage One consultation report, as part of the papers presented to the Council Cabinet.

The Statutory Notice should consider the following prescribed alteration – the establishment of a specialist SEN provision enlargement of the school by up to 2 children per year group for the SRP - ASC provision (bringing the total of number of pupils to 47 per year group)

Governors at Hermitage School are expecting to consider the Statutory Notices Representations at meeting during June 2021, where they will consider their recommendation to the Council Cabinet. The Council Cabinet will reach a decision on the two proposals in their July Cabinet 2021.

Governors and the Local Authority will need to consider whether concerns from Stage One and the Statutory Notice have been addressed. Key issues raised in this consultation have been

- Will there be sufficient revenue and capital funding for the expansion and SRP-ASC?
- Will playground and other space be protected?

During the Summer Term 2021 and the Statutory Notice period the Local Authority Service Level Agreement for the SRP-ASC and revenue funding levels should be confirmed. In addition it may be helpful to share potential building changes with staff and parents, and to re-confirm social housing completion dates and likely yield.