

Report to Cllr N Jupp, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

November 2020

Changes to Post 16 Provision at Oak Grove College

Report by Director of Education and Skills

Electoral division: Northbrook

Summary

The County Council has been developing a new Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Inclusion Strategy to support the inclusion of all children and young people, particularly those with SEND. One of the aims of the County Council's [Special Educational Needs and Disabilities \(SEND\) and Inclusion Strategy 2019-2024](#) is to support the inclusion of all children and young people with SEND to participate in local mainstream schools and educational settings.

Oak Grove College is a special school in Worthing that offers provision for students with learning difficulties from Years 7-14. Following assessment of options for post-16 provision for children with SEND it is recognised that many of the pupils with less complex needs who currently undertake their post-16 studies at Oak Grove could be successfully educated within mainstream Further Education Colleges, thereby enabling Oak Grove College to focus provision for students with more complex needs.

Redesignating the post-16 provision to become more specialist would also mean there could be a reduction in the number of Post 16 planned places at the College, from 56 to 24 by 2025/26. The intention would be to retain the overall number of places at the school (256) by re-designating some of Post 16 places as Pre-16 provision. This is in line with the current patterns of attendance.

A public consultation on the proposal that post-16 provision at Oak Grove is redesignated to become more specialist and cater for pupils with complex needs including; Complex Autistic Spectrum Condition, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties and Severe Learning Difficulties took place during September and October 2020 and the outcome is set out in section 3.

Recommendations

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to approve the following proposal:

- (1) The redesignation of post-16 provision at Oak Grove College to become more specialist focusing on pupils with complex needs with effect from September 2021.
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Proposal: Background and context

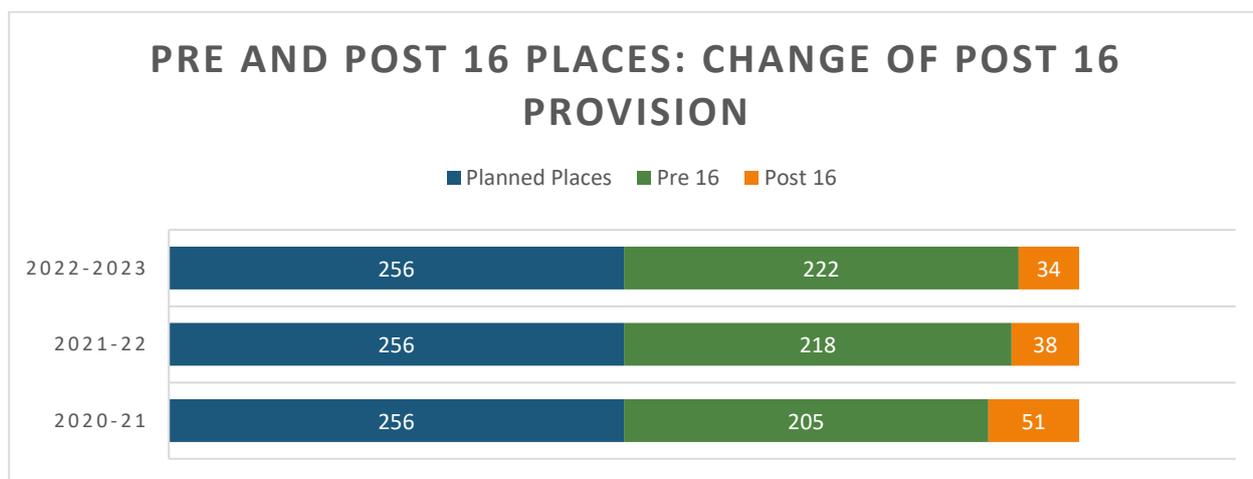
- 1.1 The SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2019-2024 sets out how the County Council will support the inclusion of all children and young people, with a particular focus on those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- 1.2 The vision is that all children and young people in West Sussex will, irrespective of their learning needs or abilities, gain the skills and confidence to live well in their community. They will be supported and nurtured through an educational system that responds to their circumstances and prepares them for adulthood.
- 1.3 Within the Strategy three priorities have been identified:
 - Knowing our children and families well (an inclusive, person centred approach).
 - Meeting the needs of our children and young people through our schools, educational settings and services.
 - Working together towards solutions (collective responsibility).
- 1.4 As part of the strategy, a review of existing specialist provision has been undertaken. This review looked specifically at the SEND primary need type for children in attendance across all special schools. Oak Grove College had completed analysis and forecasted Post 16 provision modelled on their adapted curriculum and how this had changed over recent years. This included the different SEND primary need types.
- 1.5 The post 16 provision (or sixth form) at Oak Grove College (OGC) was initially for children with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) / Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) however, the designation of the whole school is currently as being for pupils with generic learning difficulties. The Post 16 provision has historically been generally available for all who attended the school.
- 1.6 Since its inception OGC has worked with local Further Education (FE) colleges, Greater Brighton Metropolitan (GB MET, formally Northbrook College) and Chichester College, to support learners in Year 11 who would be suited to undertake their Post 16 studies in an FE College.
- 1.7 OGC commissioned GB MET to provide a day of curriculum involving travel, training and vocational learning on the GB MET college campus to assist pupils in gaining an insight into what studying at GB MET would involve. By introducing this at KS4 the strategic aim was to support OGC students in making informed and appropriate choices about their Post 16 provision.
- 1.8 The successful uptake of the course offer at GB MET has led to a decrease in the numbers staying on for Post 16 provision at OGC with only 7 Year 11 students staying in the last 2 years. In addition, the proportion of Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) students in the sixth form is decreasing and this trend is expected to continue as the number of MLD students move through.

2 Proposal details

- 2.1 It is proposed to redesignate the Post 16 provision at OGC to become more specialist and cater for young people with complex needs including Complex

Autistic Spectrum Condition, Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties and Severe Learning Difficulties. These young people would receive specialist support and focused teaching through individualised programmes of support against meeting targets set out in their Educational and Health Care Plan (EHCP). Through the EHCP annual review process, these young people would be identified as requiring provision from OGC and that remaining at OGC would give that young person the best opportunity in preparing for adulthood.

- 2.2 It is also proposed to reduce the number of Post 16 planned places at OGC, from 56 to 24 by 2025/26. This would be a gradual process to enable support to be given to young people and families that are already attending sixth form provision within OGC and prepare for transition. It will also enable FE providers to develop and expand specialist courses they have on offer and adapt to future needs of the young people.
- 2.3 The intention would be to retain the overall number of places at the college (256). The places from Post 16 would be redesignated within the school at Pre 16. Forecasts of future places needed within the Worthing area are significant and additional places will be required. This is in line with current and forecasted patterns of attendance.
- 2.4 The chart below details the reduction in planned places for Post 16 at OGC in the next 3 academic years as it moves towards 24 planned places in 2025/26. It also demonstrates how Pre 16 planned places at OGC will increase.



2.5 The change of provision for Post 16 would be the culmination of a piece of strategic work that began in 2012-13, by Oak Grove College, with the creation of the one-year transition course and more recently in 2017 with KS4 college transition day added to OGC MLD cohort curriculum.

3 Other options considered

- 3.1 Moving post 16 provision away from the college site was considered as an option for the college. However, no premises were available locally that would meet the requirements of the college. This option was considered to create additional planned places at Pre 16 to meet future demand for specialist places of secondary age within the Worthing district.
- 3.2 Maintaining the current cohorts attending the college, this would not support the aims of SEND and Inclusion strategy 2019-24. This could also reduce provision, locally, provided by further education providers.

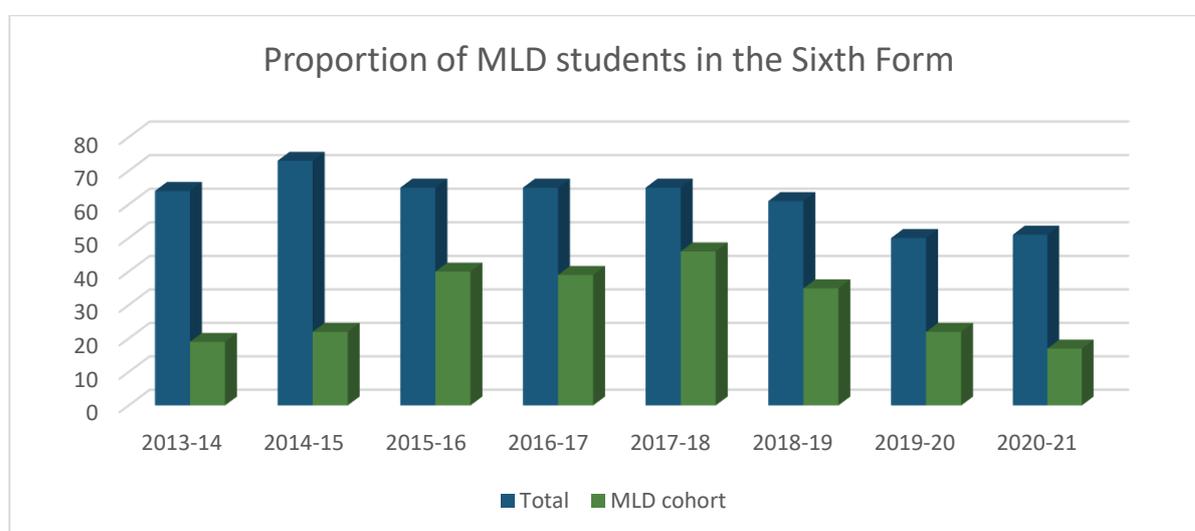
- 3.3 Do nothing. The pressure, locally on SEND specialist places is forecasted to increase significantly in future years. OGC is forecasted to need an additional 15 places by 2025/26 including the potential places saved by re-designating OGC Post 16 provision. Without this proposal an additional 49 places are forecasted on a site that has reached its net capacity and expansion options are limited.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 On 25 August 2020, copies of the public consultation document for Changes to Post 16 Provision at Oak Grove College were distributed to the following:- Members of Parliament, County Local Committee (CLC) Members, District and Parish councillors, union representatives, neighbouring authorities, the parents, staff and governors of the school, early years providers, the Diocese of Chichester, and the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. The consultation document was also published on the County Council website and the proposals received local press coverage.
- 4.2 Responses to the consultation were received from the online survey and by letter. The consultation period ended on 5th October 2020.
- 4.3 A total of 11 responses were received in response to the online consultation. A summary of the responses to the questions in the survey is set out in the Appendix . Feedback to the online survey will be added to the website following the Cabinet Member's decision.
- 4.4 Two letters were received from the College's management committee and one from the Thrive Federation. (Oak Grove College is part of the Federation of Special Schools comprising of Oak Grove College, Cornfield, Heron's Dale and Palatine schools.) Both letters are in agreement with the proposal providing that funding levels are appropriate and representative of individual pupil needs.
- 4.5 A Covid-19 compliant public consultation took place at Oak Grove College on 22nd September 2020 at 2pm and 6pm. This was attended by a total of 5 parents. Main concerns centred on - the maintenance of EHCP (i.e. would my child keep their EHCP if they were to move into further education), appropriate support for the young person and what courses will be available Post 16. Attendees were advised that EHCP's would remain in place and would be a statutory requirement to be implemented by the education provider; support would continue to be available from the Special Educational Needs Assessment Team (SENAT) and the local authority will continue to work with parents and families. In response to this attendees commented that they felt reassured by the information given by the Headteacher and Local Authority Officers
- 4.6 No responses to the consultation were received after the closing date of 5th October. The responses showed 55% of respondents supported the proposals, 9% were against and 36% were neutral. 82% of respondents agree that the school is centered on the needs of the children and learners.
- 4.7 The responses indicated that concerns centred on whether there was adequate provision and choice of Post 16 courses delivered by local further education providers. Funding for appropriate support for the young people was also raised. There was also concern about whether support from the school and local authority would continue or whether it would be cut off when a young person leaves Oak Grove College i.e. a need for reassurance about a smooth and

supported transition and confidence that the young person will succeed within a further education setting.

- 4.8 With a relatively low response rate, additional written comments provided to the questions indicated support of a redesignation providing that reassurances are given to parents who want their young person to remain at OGC that they will have this choice. Parents expressed views that they may need further support or advice from OGC. The headteacher expressed views, during public meetings, that continued support would be offered to parents / families despite their young person no longer being in attendance at OGC and that OGC would work towards the best outcomes for young people who have attended.
- 4.9 Feedback from the consultation is focused on support being maintained for the children and young people and that parents will have a choice of Post 16 provision. This will be supported by school staff and local authority officers through the annual review process of EHCP's. Confidence and anxieties should be alleviated as children and young people move through their year 11 education and take part in designed transition to support each individual, depending on their individual requirements. Despite the majority supporting the proposal being slim at 55%, it is important that this proposal proceeds as OGC has adapted its curriculum, invested in transition arrangements and continues to support parental confidence with potential change. OGC identified that the MLD cohort will continue to achieve and challenge themselves within further education away from OGC. The success of this KS4 options course has led to a decrease in the numbers of young people staying on (with MLD Year 11 students) with only 7 staying on in the last 2 years.



- 4.10 The above chart demonstrates the reduction in MLD students within Post 16 provision at OGC. The proposed changes to OGC sixth form would be the culmination of a piece of strategic work that began in 2012-13 with the creation of the one year transition course and more recently in 2017 with KS4 college day added to our MLD cohort curriculum.
- 4.11 The full set of consultation responses and the two letters received (Thrive Federation of Special Schools) have been made available to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills.
- 4.12 The proposal has been shared with the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People.

5 Finance – Revenue Consequences

5.1 The tables below show the planned movement of funded places within Oak Grove College over the next five years and the associated increase in costs (in terms of top ups) that this would entail. These costs reflect the changes in funding arrangements and bandings based on current top up values. Children with complex needs will be on Bands 3, 4 & 5 compared to children with MLD on bands 1 & 2.

	Current Year 2020/21 Places	Year 2 2021/22 Places	Year 3 2022/23 Places	Year 6 2025/26 Places
Pre-16 Generic	205	218	222	232
Post-16 Generic	51	24	10	0
Post-16 SLD/PMLD	0	14	24	24
Total Places	256	256	256	256

	Current Year 2020/21 £m	Year 2 2021/22 £m	Year 3 2022/23 £m	Year 6 2025/26 £m
Pre-16 Generic	£1.454	£1.547	£1.575	£1.646
Post-16 Generic	£0.362	£0.170	£0.071	£0.000
Post-16 SLD/PMLD	£0.000	£0.166	£0.285	£0.285
Total Top Up	£1.816	£1.883	£1.931	£1.931
Increased Cost	n/a	£0.067	£0.115	£0.115

5.2 The effect of the proposal:

(a) How the cost represents good value / future savings

Although this proposed change in provision will see an increase in the costs at OGC of £0.115m, by 2025/26 there will be an estimated overall saving within the High Needs budget of £1.874m :

	Year 6 2025/26 £m
Increased cost of provision at Oak Grove College	-£0.115
Post-16 Generic - Alternative provision at FE Colleges (51 places at an average cost of £6k)	-£0.306
Pre-16 Generic – Cost avoidance in Independent and Non-maintained Sector (27 places at an average cost of £45k)	£1.215

Post-16 SLD/PMLD – Cost avoidance in Independent and Non-maintained Sector (24 places at an average cost of £45k)	£1.080
Total High Needs Saving	£1.874

(b) Human resources

Existing staffing numbers would be expected to remain in place. Those specialist teachers and support staff would continue to educate and support those young people with complex needs Post 16. Those who have supported MLD young people would be redeployed within the Key Stage 3 & 4 curriculum.

6 Risk implications and mitigations

Risk	Mitigating Action (in place or planned)
Parental confidence low with local Further Education Providers	Special Education Needs Assessment Teams Post 16 officers working closely with school and families to secure best outcomes. The chart (4.9) supports developing parental confidence.
Rise in young people with complex needs Post 16	SLD and PMLD are forecasted to remain consistent at present levels until 2025/26. Children with Communication & Interaction difficulties are forecasted to increase within the Worthing Borough. It is impossible to predict how complex each case will be; however, the local authority is aware of the general increases.

7 Policy alignment and compliance

Legal Implications

7.1 Section 19, Part 1, paragraph 19 and Schedule 5 to The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools)(England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) sets out the arrangements for consultation and representations and the options available to the authority taking the decision and any appeal mechanisms available to specified bodies.

8 Equality and Human Rights Assessment

8.1 For the majority of the protected characteristics no identifiable impact has been identified. The proposals may only have a specific impact on a small number of families that would choose OGC Post 16 provision with less complex needs. All of the planning has taken into account the pupils falling into these groups so as to understand;

- their current and future needs
- the decisions that have led to attendance at the current school
- the implications for disruption to current provision
- the need to seek and plan alternative provision (local FE providers)
- the impact upon the physical and emotional wellbeing of the young people
- the ability of alternative provision to meet their needs
- the action required to ensure safe and effective transition.

- the need to avoid or mitigate any identified adverse impact on these young people both as a group and as individuals.

8.2 These factors have informed the appraisal of the proposals as the specific individuals are known in their schools and their individual needs understood. Their parents and carers and the other groups representing their interests have been able to engage in the consultation and have been able to set out fully any concerns which have particular impact upon these factors. Those have helped inform the final proposals.

8.3 The gradual transition and reduction in planned places will provide security for young people not ready to transition to local FE providers. In time parental confidence will increase as FE providers enhance their reputation for delivery of SEND provision through collaborative work with schools and the local authority.

9 Social Value and Sustainability Assessment

9.1 None for the purpose of this report

10 Crime and Disorder Reduction Assessment

10.1 Not Applicable

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Appendix – Summary of Responses from the Consultation on The Proposed Changes to Post 16 Provision at Oak Grove College

Background papers - None