

Consultation - Esteem Multi-Academy Trust
Proposal to Increase Planned Places at Holbrook School for Autism and add a Satellite Site

Overview

Each year, Holbrook School for Autism is approached by Derbyshire County Council to accommodate additional pupils. The school consistently operates at full capacity, with a substantial waiting list of SEND pupils eager to attend. An exciting opportunity has arisen for the Esteem Multi Academy Trust, of which the school is a part, to take over the lease of The Whitemoor Centre, a building owned by Derbyshire County Council. Located adjacent to Holbrook School for Autism’s Belper site, this facility was previously used as a day care centre for adults with learning disabilities. Expanding the school site through this arrangement would enable the Centre to serve as a valuable resource for young people with SEND and the wider local community.



This proposal outlines our intention to expand the Belper site of Holbrook School for Autism through a lease arrangement for an additional building. Initially, the expansion will create 14 additional pupil places, with capacity increasing to 70 additional places phased in over the next two years.

Introduction

As this proposal constitutes a "significant change," we must consult in accordance with Department for Education guidance. This document outlines the consultation process. We are committed to ensuring that all our stakeholders are fully informed and have appropriate opportunities to provide their input and share their views as part of this expansion.

Holbrook School for Autism is a special school catering to pupils aged 4 to 19 years with a diagnosis of autism. The school currently supports 159 pupils, including 14 based at the Whitemoor Centre, all of whom have an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) plan. The school operates across two sites: the main site in Holbrook primarily serves pupils aged 4 to 13 years, while the second site, located at 91 John O’Gaunts Way, Belper, DE56 0DB, supports pupils aged 14 to 19 years.

Holbrook School for Autism and the Whitemoor Centre share the same site in Belper and have a longstanding history of collaboration to support young people and adults across Derbyshire. Derbyshire County Council has recently indicated its intention to vacate the Whitemoor Centre, creating an opportunity for Holbrook School for Autism to take responsibility for the entire site and expand its adjacent education provision. This expansion would not only benefit the young people at Holbrook School for Autism and their families but also make a meaningful impact on the wider community. The development would include public community spaces and a café, designed to be open and welcoming to local residents, enhancing connections and resources within the Belper area.

The primary purpose of the expanded school site would be to provide enhanced opportunities for secondary and post-16 pupils to develop employability skills and gain practical experience, supporting their future independence and life goals. This would include roles in the proposed café and access to dedicated spaces for horticulture, art, and design and technology.

Challenges

The school consistently has a waiting list of pupils with SEND eager to join and is approached annually to accommodate increasing numbers of pupils with specific needs it is well-equipped to support. Despite the addition of two new classrooms at the Holbrook site in 2021, many Derbyshire pupils still cannot be offered places due to a lack of physical space within the school.

Need for the increase in numbers and extra accommodation

The figures below showing total consultations for each year and number of places that were able to be offered, give an indication of the demand for places at Holbrook School for Autism over the past five years:

Year	Total No of Consultations	Places able to be offered
2019/20	118	8
2020/21	145	18
2021/22	145	17
2022/2023	248	14
2023/2024	418	24

Derbyshire County Council is the primary commissioner of pupil places at the school, with pupils traveling from various areas across Derbyshire to access its specialist provision. As a result, it is essential to apply to the Department for Education (DfE) to increase the academy's

capacity and propose an expansion onto the leased satellite site to accommodate the growing demand for pupil places.

The limited size and constraints of the buildings and land at Holbrook School for Autism's existing two sites mean that further expansion is not possible without securing an additional site.

There is a pressing national and regional shortage of suitable spaces for pupils with higher-functioning autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and Holbrook School for Autism is determined to enhance opportunities for these pupils wherever possible. The proposed use of the Whitemoor site for certain classes would allow the existing adjacent Holbrook building to function exclusively as a Primary hub for higher-functioning pupils. Additionally, the school plans to collaborate with Belper High School, located on the same street as Holbrook and Whitemoor, to establish a Secondary hub. Bringing these facilities together within one locality would create excellent opportunities for resource and facility sharing while supporting smoother transitions for pupils as they move from primary to secondary in a familiar environment.

The school plans to develop community spaces within the Whitemoor Centre building, which will be available for public use or hire for activities such as meetings, classes, social events, and children's soft play. Additionally, the school will establish a café open to the public, providing a welcoming community hub while offering post-16 pupils at Holbrook valuable opportunities to develop employability skills and gain work experience.

Approval needed from the Department for Education

When an academy trust proposes changes to a school's characteristics, as outlined above, the Department for Education requires specific criteria to be met, including a formal consultation process. This process must be completed before any changes can be implemented, in accordance with the Academies Act 2010. The publication of this document marks the beginning of the consultation process led by the Esteem Multi Academy Trust, ensuring that all stakeholders can share their views on the proposal.

The guidelines for the process are set out in [Making significant changes to an open academy](#).

The Consultation Process

This document marks the beginning of the consultation process, offering stakeholders an opportunity to share their views on the proposal. The consultation process will follow these steps:

1. Launch of Consultation

- a. This document will be distributed on **Monday, 2nd December 2024**, and a notice of consultation will be published on the Esteem Multi Academy Trust website.

2. Consultation Period

- a. The consultation period will run for **three weeks**, closing on **Monday, 23rd December 2024**.
 - b. During this time, stakeholders are invited to review the proposal and submit their feedback.
- 3. Review of Feedback**
- a. At the end of the consultation period, the Trust will review and consider all submitted comments.
- 4. Submission to the Regional Schools Commissioner**
- a. Once all feedback has been considered, the Trust will submit the proposal, along with the consultation responses, to the Regional Schools Commissioner as part of the significant change process.

How to Share Your Views

The Esteem Multi Academy Trust welcomes feedback through the following channels:

- **In Writing To:**
- Governance Manager, Esteem Multi Academy Trust, Suite 43, Sherwood Park, Lake View Drive, Nottingham NG15 0DT

- **Via Email:**

info@esteemmat.co.uk

- **By Completing the Consultation Form:**

The form is included at the end of this document and is also available as a separate Word document. Please complete and return it as instructed.



EMAT CONSULTATION FEEDBACK FORM

ESTEEM MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST - PUBLIC CONSULTATION

This form gives you the opportunity to comment on the proposals for Holbrook School for Autism.

Your feedback is important to us and will be considered as part of the consultation process. Your details will not be passed to any third-party organisation and will only be used internally for the purpose of understanding your views on the proposal.

Please fill in your details below, and your comments, and return to the address at the bottom of the page. Alternatively, this can be emailed to: info@esteemmat.co.uk

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel/Email: _____

Comments:

Please return to: Governance Manager, Esteem Multi-Academy Trust, Suite 43, Sherwood Park, Lake View Drive, Nottingham NG15 0DT