

Complete Proposal
to Expand
The Lincoln St Christopher's School

MATTERS TO BE SPECIFIED IN SECTION 19 OF THE EDUCATION AND
INSPECTIONS ACT 2006

PROPOSALS TO MAKE A PRESCRIBED ALTERATION TO A SCHOOL

07 November 2019

Contact details

This proposal has been published by Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YQ regarding the expansion of The Lincoln St Christopher's School, Hykeham Road, Lincoln, LN6 8AR.

Implementation

The proposal is to expand The Lincoln St Christopher's School with full effect from 1 September 2024. This proposal is being made to ensure that there is sufficient provision for primary and secondary age children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). This would enable the Local Authority (LA) to fulfil its statutory duty of providing school places for all children of statutory school age in Lincolnshire. This proposal will address the current and projected need for SEND places covering a wide range of special educational needs including; physical and medical needs, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, social communication difficulties and severe and profound learning difficulties.

Objections and Comments

Any person or organisation may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to the School Organisation Planning Team, Children's Services, Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YQ or by emailing schoolorganisation@lincolnshire.gov.uk to be received by the deadline of 5 December 2019.

Alteration Description

The proposal under consideration is to permanently expand the capacity at The Lincoln St Christopher's School to contribute towards ensuring that there is the required number of school places for primary and secondary age children with SEND in Lincolnshire. This proposal will address the projected need for a wide range of SEND provision covering physical and medical needs, Autistic Spectrum Disorders, social communication difficulties and severe and profound learning difficulties. The proposal would enable children to attend a suitable school with the specialist support they require whilst reducing the need to place children in schools a considerable distance away from where they live, in some cases out of county. The proposal would expand the school by the addition of 133 places across two sites, which would increase the capacity from 200 to 333. The expansion would come into full effect from 1 September 2024.

School Capacity and Sites

The proposal being consulted on is to build a dedicated primary aged site to accommodate 130 pupils on the site of the former Usher Junior School on Skellingthorpe Road, Lincoln. The current site on Hykeham Road, Lincoln would be extensively redeveloped to provide specialist secondary aged education for 203 pupils. In total the school would expand by the addition of 133 places across two sites, which would increase the capacity from 200 to 333. Currently St Christopher's School operates from one site with both primary and secondary aged pupils.

The school's current capacity is 200 although there are 235 attending the school, with some temporary accommodation on site. The proposed expansion would provide additional teaching and resource space for the children already on roll and enable the school to provide specialist places for more SEND pupils.

Consideration was given to a number of options to address the need for additional capacity. The site on Skellingthorpe Road was selected as the preferred option for expansion as the existing St Christopher's site on Hykeham Road is not big enough to enable expansion and remodelling to take place. The former Usher site is LCC land and will enable significant building work to take place without disrupting the day to day operation of St Christopher's. It is also in close proximity to the existing site to allow staff to travel between the two. This site will allow a primary and secondary model to be adopted with the least disruption to existing pupils of the school.

Following statutory consultation, if approved, it is proposed work would begin in early 2020 on the new primary facility and in early 2022 on the current site. The intention of the Local Authority (LA) is to complete the new primary facility by 1 September 2022 and complete The Lincoln St Christopher's School as a whole by 1 September 2024, this would be managed to cause minimal disruption. Pupils would continue to be educated on the current site whilst the new primary premises are built. Once the primary site is complete it will provide the necessary capacity to relocate and educate all primary age pupils, freeing up capacity at the existing site whilst the current St Christopher's School undergoes extensive redeveloping and remodelling. This would be managed to cause minimal disruption to the school during term time making the best use of school holidays where possible. Any potential building project would look to be isolated from the existing provision to ensure minimal disruption to the children and the running of the school. Once both building projects are complete the pupils will be split between the primary and secondary sites for the start of the September 2024 academic year. The new facilities will present excellent opportunities to improve the school overall that would benefit the children already on roll as well as provide additional accommodation for increasing pupil numbers. It will also remove the need for temporary classrooms on site and provide flexibility in the way the accommodation is used to deliver the curriculum.

The school would operate over two sites under one leadership and management team and the same governing body. Admissions arrangements would remain the same.

Primary aged pupils would be based at the new site on Skellingthorpe Road and secondary aged pupils would be educated at the existing redeveloped St Christopher's site on Hykeham Road, Lincoln. There would be a 'middle school' over-lap on both the primary and secondary school sites to ensure the primary aged pupils experience a smooth transition into their secondary education.

The sites are located 1.5 miles away by road which is only a few minutes away, it will still be easily accessible to the community that the school serves and will not have a significant impact on the journey of those pupils travelling from other areas of the county and beyond. It will also be suitable for staff working across both sites should their contracts require them to.

Each site will have its own facilities in order to deliver education targeted to its specific age group (primary and secondary). Both sites will have sufficient outdoor space, halls, therapy rooms etc. One facility that will be used across both sites will be the hydrotherapy pool which will be located at the new (primary) site. This facility is for all pupils at St Christopher's, the school will ensure it is accessed by all and pupils will be transported from the secondary site over to the primary site when required.

Objectives

This proposal is part of the Building Communities of Specialist Provision Strategy. The Lincolnshire SEND project is a strategy supported through significant investment where the LA aim to enhance the good and outstanding specialist education provision currently provided. The objectives of the project is to ensure a sufficient supply of specialist school places to meet the needs of pupils within their local community, thus reducing travel time; develop a flexible education with greater collaboration between mainstream and special schools; provide opportunities for pupils with SEND to transition to mainstream schools; clarify and enhance existing health offer to special schools; provide opportunities for mainstream and special school staff to enhance their knowledge of SEND.

The proposal detailed in this document is to expand The Lincoln St Christopher's School with full effect from 1 September 2024. The objectives are to ensure that there are sufficient places in Lincolnshire to accommodate children with special educational needs and disabilities, enabling the LA to fulfil its statutory duty of providing school places for all children of statutory school age in Lincolnshire within a reasonable distance from where they live.

The LA considers this proposal to be the most appropriate solution to address the current and projected need for SEND places to enable primary and secondary aged children to attend a suitable school with the specialist provision that they need, whilst reducing the need to place children in schools a considerable distance away from where they live. The LA would not be actively participating in this process if it did not see significant advantages for children and young people, their parents/carers and the local community.

Other options around Lincolnshire have been explored and of the special schools not already identified for planned expansion, only two could be considered for potential expansion to meet locality need instead of Lincoln St Christopher's School. However they have not been found suitable due to reasons such as geographical location in relation to demographic pressures, undersized sites, distance that pupils would have to travel, parental preference, impacts on standards, potential planning challenges, costs and leadership and management capacity. This is the most appropriate school in Lincolnshire for expansion to increase special educational needs provision of this type in this area, whilst also addressing a potential overcrowding situation in buildings that could be improved through this proposal.

The proposal to expand The Lincoln St Christopher's School has the support of the Headteacher and the Governing Body. The School Improvement Service is confident that the school has the required leadership, management and governance.

This proposal will provide the opportunity to continue to improve the learning experience and outcomes for the children to enable them to reach their full potential. It will also assist in meeting parental preference. The Government has made it clear that the wishes of parents and carers should be taken into account in planning and managing school estates. DfE guidance states that places should be allocated where parents want them and successful and popular schools be allowed to grow. The Lincoln St Christopher's School was rated overall by Ofsted as a 'Good' school with 'Outstanding' characteristics at its last inspection in June 2019.

Having additional classrooms and more children on roll at the school will also have financial benefits for the school. This may potentially provide the opportunity to enhance teaching provision and career opportunities for staff which in turn will benefit the learning experience of the children. This opportunity will support the school in maintaining standards and provide a platform for continued improvements.

Consultation

In order for the school to expand the LA must follow the necessary statutory legal processes as required by the Secretary of State in accordance with the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 and updated by the Education Act 2011 together with the guidance "Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools. Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers" (October 2018) issued by the DfE. Under this guidance there is no longer a requirement for a prescribed consultation period prior to the publication of the Statutory Notice and Complete Proposal. However, the DfE still has a strong expectation that LAs will consult interested parties in developing their proposal. To fulfil this expectation the LA undertook a fair and open consultation to ensure all views were considered.

Consultation originally began on 5 September 2019. A letter incorporating relevant information and reasons for the proposal was sent out to interested parties to commence a four week period of consultation. There was the opportunity to provide a response to the consultation online, by letter, email or by returning a response form by 3 October 2019. An information event was also held at the school on 16 September 2019 for parents and staff.

All written responses received during consultation have been made available to the Executive Councillor for consideration and further details are confirmed in the decision report which can be found through the link below or by writing to request a copy. To briefly summarise, there were 13 valid responses in total with 0 against the proposal, 12 for the proposal and 1 neither for nor against.

Information events were also held at the school to discuss the proposed expansion.

Parents/carers and other interested parties were given the opportunity to respond as part of the consultation process by 3 October 2019. Copies of the letter commencing consultation and the response form were also published on the County Council website under the webpage [Current Consultations](http://www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/schoolorganisation) on www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/schoolorganisation

Under current legislation the LA is the decision maker for the proposal and is co-ordinating the statutory process before making a final decision in February 2020.

The LA, as decision maker, must be able to show that all relevant issues raised are taken into consideration in the decision making process.

Project Costs

Should a decision be made at the end of this process to proceed, the build costs would be met from Children's Services Capital Programme through Basic Need and other allocated capital funding. The school's place revenue funding will be made through the Local Authority's special schools funding formula within the High Needs block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Provision

The expansion of the school will have a positive impact on SEND provision. The additional teaching and resource space created will benefit the children already on roll as well as to enable the school to increase the capacity. The increased capacity will enable staff to pupil ratios to be maintained without the need to increase the number of pupils in a class, as there will be more classrooms and more staff.

Related Proposals

The proposal to expand The Lincoln St Christopher's School is not related to any other statutory proposal.

What will happen now?

Any person may object to or make comments on this proposal by sending them to the School Organisation Planning Team, Children's Services, Lincolnshire County Council, County Offices, 51 Newland, Lincoln LN1 1YQ, by emailing schoolorganisation@lincolnshire.gov.uk or online via www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/schoolorganisation through a simple online survey.

At the close of the 4 week representation period (statutory formal consultation) on 5 December 2019 responses will be collated and analysed. A further report will be presented for a Full Executive final decision in February 2020 on the expansion of the school. The representation period is the final opportunity for people and organisations to express their views about the proposal and ensure that they will be taken into account by the decision maker.