

Report subject	Winchelsea School Satellite Unit and Post-16 Place Expansion
Meeting date	27 May 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	<p>In line with statutory guidance on making significant changes to maintained schools, this report outlines the proposal to create a new Winchelsea School satellite unit and nursery at Stanley Green Infant Academy, in addition to expanding post-16 places at Winchelsea School's Broadstone Youth Centre site. These developments support the council's duty to provide sufficient specialist school places and form part of a wider programme to expand high-quality local SEND provision. The proposal responds to rising demand for specialist places driven by increasing numbers of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and the resulting reliance on independent and non-maintained special schools.</p> <p>By using surplus space available at Stanley Green Infant Academy and at Broadstone Youth Centre for post-16 provision, the Council aims to strengthen local capacity so that more children and young people can access appropriate education closer to home. Increasing provision will reduce the need for costly out-of-area placements, often involving higher fees and significant transport costs, while improving outcomes by enabling pupils to remain within their communities and delivering long-term financial efficiencies for the Council.</p>
Recommendations	<p>It is RECOMMENDED that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Cabinet agrees with the proposal to establish a new Winchelsea School satellite unit and nursery for children with SEND at Stanley Green Infant Academy, in addition to expanding Winchelsea School's post-16 places at Broadstone Youth Centre, with effect from 1 September 2026. b) Cabinet approve a budget allocation of £710k using High Needs Provision Allocation.
Reason for recommendations	<p>To increase local specialist early years and key stage 1 capacity in the Oakdale and wider area, in addition to permitting an increase to the number of post-16 places made available in Broadstone, to meet the assessed educational needs of children and young people with SEND and to reduce pressure on the High Needs Budget. The Council is the authority for approving this significant change.</p>

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Richard Burton, Children and Young People
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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Decision

Background

1. Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Education Act 1996 to ensure sufficient school places, including appropriate provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Nationally and locally, demand for specialist provision has risen significantly due to sustained growth in the number of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). This mirrors trends reported in other council areas, where the increasing prevalence of complex needs has placed pressure on both mainstream and specialist provision.
2. Across the local area the number of maintained EHCPs has risen sharply in recent years and is forecast to continue to grow. This has contributed to increased demand for specialist placements and greater reliance on Independent and Non- Maintained Special Schools (INMSS), which typically involve higher placement costs and require longer journeys for pupils. Other councils have similarly highlighted that insufficient local capacity has resulted in escalating expenditure on out- of- area placements and reduced opportunities for children to be educated within their own communities.
3. To address these pressures, the Council's SEND Sufficiency Strategy sets out the need to expand local specialist and inclusive provision. Establishing satellite units within mainstream schools is recognised nationally as a key mechanism for enhancing local SEND capacity, supporting inclusion, and enabling pupils with EHCPs (including those in early years) to receive tailored support.
4. The introduction of a new 50 place Winchelsea School satellite unit and nursery at Stanley Green Infant Academy aligns with these strategic aims. The provision will support children with a diverse set of learning difficulties and complex needs including those with ASD, communication needs, and moderate learning difficulties, who require specialist support beyond what is ordinarily available in a mainstream setting. It forms part of a wider program to increase specialist places locally, reduce reliance on INMSS placements, and ensure children can access high- quality education close to home. This approach supports improved outcomes, strengthens inclusive practice across the area, and delivers better value for public resources in the long term.
5. Winchelsea School also seeks to enhance its current post-16 offer at Broadstone Youth Centre by creating 20 additional places, enabling more young people with SEND to access high-quality maintained specialist provision locally. Expanding maintained provision ensures greater continuity of support, closer alignment with the curriculum and therapeutic approaches with stronger oversight of quality through established local authority governance. It also reduces reliance on independent

placements, which are typically higher-cost and often located outside the local area. By increasing local maintained capacity, the Council can offer more stable, inclusive pathways for young people, improve long-term outcomes, and deliver better value for money.

The proposal for a new satellite unit and nursery and expansion of post-16 places

6. **Type of Provision:** The Council proposes to establish a new Winchelsea School Special Educational Needs (SEN) satellite unit and nursery, based at Stanley Green Infant Academy, to provide up to 50 places for early years and key stage 1 pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The proposal constitutes a prescribed alteration under the *School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) Regulations 2013*, and the statutory consultation and publication requirements have been followed accordingly.
7. The need for this development arises from a well- documented increase in demand for specialist provision both nationally and locally. Growing numbers of children with EHCPs have placed increased pressure on existing specialist and mainstream provision, a trend mirrored in other local authorities where sharp rises in EHCPs have resulted in increased dependence on Independent and Non- Maintained Special Schools. The lack of specialist places has resulted in some pupils travelling considerable distances or being placed out-of-area. Establishing a new Special Educational Needs (SEN) satellite unit and nursery at Stanley Green Infant Academy will address this gap and form a key component of the Council's strategy to strengthen local inclusion and reduce reliance on high- cost placements.
8. The site will be fully integrated into the Winchelsea School family, reflecting its values of "I am. I can. I will.", fostering a sense of belonging for all pupils and will align with the SEND Code of Practice and the Children and Families Act 2014 by promoting inclusion and supporting parental preference for local provision.
9. **Accommodation:** To accommodate the satellite unit and nursery, Stanley Green Infant Academy will permit the repurposing of surplus classroom space within the existing school building and designated outdoor space. Access to places will be phased from September 2026 to enable the satellite unit and nursery to grow gradually to its full capacity of 50 places.
10. The proposed expansion of post-16 places will be through existing floorspace within Broadstone Youth Centre.
11. **Staffing:** Staffing the provision will involve specialist expertise. A qualified teacher with knowledge and experience of ASD, communication needs, and moderate-to-severe learning difficulties will lead the provision, supported by experienced teaching assistants. Winchelsea School's SENCo will provide professional oversight, with the Headteacher retaining overall leadership responsibility. Alongside benefiting pupils within the site itself, the development will play a wider role in strengthening inclusive practice across the mainstream school and contributing to workforce development within the local system.
12. **Admissions:** Admissions to the provision will be determined through the Council's SEND Panel as part of the statutory EHCP process, ensuring that placements are made transparently and in line with identified need. Assessments will consider whether the environment is appropriate to secure the outcomes set out in their EHCP.

13. **Governance:** Governance and monitoring arrangements will align with Winchelsea School's leadership structures and the Council's SEND governance framework. The Council will monitor the effectiveness of the satellite unit and nursery through pupil progress data, attendance, inclusion indicators and feedback from parents and pupils. This is consistent with the requirements of the SEN Improvement Test, which places emphasis on securing improved access, quality and outcomes for children with SEND.
14. **Community Benefits:** The establishment of a satellite unit and nursery at Stanley Green Infant Academy is expected to bring substantial benefits for children, families and the wider community. It will enable more children to be educated closer to home, reducing travel time and associated stress for families. It will also help to strengthen inclusive practice in mainstream schools locally and contribute to a more sustainable pattern of provision across the area. Similar initiatives in other local authorities have highlighted wider system benefits, including greater opportunities for mainstream- specialist collaboration and reductions in the reliance on costly out- of- area placements.
15. Overall, the proposal represents a strategically aligned and carefully designed expansion of specialist provision. It is intended to improve outcomes for children with a diverse set of learning difficulties and complex needs, enhance inclusive capacity within Oakdale and the wider area, and support the Council in meeting its statutory duty to secure sufficient and appropriate school places for all children and young people.

Consultation

16. **Informal Consultation:** Prior to launching the statutory consultation, the Council undertook informal engagement with parents, school staff and local residents during February 2026 to gauge early views on the proposed establishment of a satellite unit, lowering the age range from 4-19 years to 2-19 years to accommodate nursery provision, and expand post-16 places for Winchelsea School. A total of 4 respondents provided feedback, and all were supportive of the proposal reflecting recognition of the need for additional local SEND provision and confidence in the benefits the development would bring. Illustrative comments included:
 - “Creating spaces from 2yrs is much needed, and Stanley Green is a great site for this to happen. Winchelsea is run incredibly well by the head so I am sure this will be a huge support to lots more children.”
 - “My child is thriving not surviving with Winchelsea post-16 provision. They are the best in land! Of course we support this proposal to let more children benefit from their expertise. A wonderful proposal for more children to thrive.”
17. **Formal Consultation:** The Council launched its formal statutory consultation on 27 February 2026, in accordance with the *School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) Regulations 2013*. The representation period ran until 27 March 2026.
18. To ensure wide awareness, the consultation was publicised through multiple channels, including:
 - an advert in the local newspaper.
 - publication on the Council's website.

- targeted communication issued to parents and staff of Winchelsea School and Stanley Green Infant Academy, notifications to local headteachers, local early years settings and other statutory consultees.
19. The consultation received 7 responses, 6 of which were supportive of the proposal including comments such as:
- “The prospect of being able to offer additional places at Winchelsea is amazing... I believe it is paramount these children are able to access provisions as early as possible so the need for early years will be extremely beneficial, offering them the best start.”
 - “It is a brilliant idea for our kids and new kids can access to this service... I completely agree with this proposal, and I hope we can have support from council and community to get it done soon.”
 - “The need for 16-19 placements for SEND is very great.”
20. One respondent raised an objection; however, officers consider this to have arisen from a misunderstanding of the proposal. The respondent appeared to believe that post-16 pupils would be located alongside early years and key stage 1 children, whereas the provisions will in fact operate separately, with no mixing of age groups.
21. The positive feedback received has strengthened the proposal, which is now brought forward for formal consideration
22. The outcome of the consultation is presented as Appendix 1.

Options Appraisal

23. Two options have been considered as follows:

Option 1: In line with the Council’s SEND Sufficiency Strategy and SEND and AP Improvement Plan, work with school headteachers to utilise surplus accommodation to co-locate satellite units on school sites to increase the availability of local specialist places enabling children and families to access quality specialist support within their local area. Proposals require the council to follow the significant change process requiring consultation and consideration of representations as part of a formal decision-making process by the responsible body. In the case of schools maintained by the local authority, the responsible body is BCP Council.

Option 2: Maintain the status quo. Option 2 does nothing to expand the availability of local specialist places and fails to increase the options available locally for parents to express a preference to attend a school that serves their area. Option 2 fails to respond to the patterns of growth and increasing demand and complexity of need and fails to deliver on the council’s strategic intent.

Summary of financial implications

24. The proposed provision will utilise accommodation identified as surplus by Stanley Green Infant Academy. The area identified requires a number of adaptations to make the indoor and outdoor spaces suitable and create necessary facilities for pupils in the Winchelsea cohort, ensuring that the space is welcoming and suitable to provide an inclusive, quality teaching and learning space. In addition to this, the identified areas of the building will be enhanced to ensure that the provision meets

modern regulatory requirements. The cost of the works is £710k and will be met using the Council's grant allocation of High Needs Provision capital. The costs of the scheme are based on a detailed quotation received from BCP Council's Construction Works Team and the costs for FFE and ICT agreed with Winchelsea School. The capital costs are approximately £14,791 per place, which represents value for money against the national benchmark of £22,890 for SEND places in refurbished accommodation.

25. The scheme encompasses the refurbishment of 4 classrooms for specialist teaching provision on the existing Winchelsea model, the subdivision of a classroom for admin space, the creation of a sensory integration and quiet room, and the formation of dedicated outdoor play space. The scheme also seeks to upgrade fire protection in the satellite part to comply with building regulations.
26. The proposal will support the High Needs Block Recovery Plan by reducing reliance on costly Independent Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) placements and out-of-area settings, which costs significantly more than local provision. Based on a unit cost comparison of specialist provision versus INMSS (approximately £35k difference), the proposal for a 50 place satellite unit, and an additional 20 post-16 places, achieves cost avoidance in the region of £2.45m.

Summary of legal implications

27. The Council has clear statutory obligations to ensure that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) can access *sufficient and appropriate* provision within its area.
28. The Children and Families Act 2014 (Part 3) places duties on local authorities to identify and assess children and young people with SEND, secure the special educational provision specified in their Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), and keep provision under review to ensure sufficiency and quality. The Act explicitly requires joint commissioning and strategic planning across education, health and care partners (Sections 25–27), meaning any proposed changes must be consistent with these statutory collaborative duties.
29. The Education Act 1996 (Section 14) places a duty on the local authority to ensure that there are sufficient schools in its area to provide “appropriate primary and secondary education” for all children, including those with SEND. These sufficiency duties extend to ensuring that any organisational changes do not compromise the local offer or parents’ rights under the SEND framework.
30. Any significant change proposal must therefore demonstrate that it maintains or enhances sufficiency, continues to meet assessed needs, and does not restrict access to provision required by law.

Summary of human resources implications

31. The establishment of a new satellite unit brings clear staffing responsibilities. The satellite unit will fall under the leadership of the Headteacher and the operational oversight of the SENCo, requiring the school to recruit and deploy qualified SEN teachers and appropriately trained teaching assistants to deliver the specialist support expected. This will have implications for staffing structures, timetabling, line management arrangements, and ongoing professional development. Winchelsea School will need to ensure staff are equipped with the specialist competencies required, supported through targeted CPD and supervision. Workforce development

will be essential to ensure the satellite unit can operate effectively and contribute to strengthening SEND expertise.

Summary of sustainability impact

32. Establishing local provision contributes positively to the Council's sustainability objectives by reducing travel distances for pupils, which in turn lowers carbon emissions and transport related costs. It also supports wider active and sustainable travel ambitions, enabling more children to access education closer to home. In the longer term, strengthened local capacity reduces reliance on high cost out-of-area placements, contributing to both environmental and financial sustainability

Summary of public health implications

33. Local specialist provision supports key public health objectives by reducing long journey and travel times. In turn this may help mitigate stress and fatigue for children with SEND and contribute to improved wellbeing and readiness for learning. Local places for local children further help strengthen inclusive local provision, promote community cohesion and thereby promote better mental health outcomes.

Summary of equality implications

34. An EIA conversation and screening exercise has been undertaken as part of the development of this proposal to ensure compliance with equalities duties. The completed assessment is available [here](#).

Summary of risk assessment

35. **Recruitment challenges:** Difficulty securing qualified SEN teachers and trained support staff may delay implementation. Mitigation: Early workforce planning, proactive recruitment, and collaboration with local special schools to provide outreach, mentoring and interim specialist support.
36. **Failure to approve the proposal:** If the proposal is not progressed, the local area will continue to rely on high cost Independent and Non-Maintained Special School (INMSS) placements, increasing financial pressure and limiting local sufficiency. Mitigation: Clear articulation of cost avoidance, strengthened evidence base, and alignment with SEND Sufficiency priorities to support decision-making.
37. **Implementation delays:** Any delay in establishing the provision could impact parental confidence and place additional pressure on existing specialist settings. Mitigation: A phased implementation plan with defined milestones, project oversight, and early engagement with school leadership to ensure readiness
38. **Inconsistent practice or role clarity within the school:** Without clear expectations, there is a risk of variability in quality of provision. Mitigation: Defined roles, training, and support via the SENCo, alongside LA quality assurance processes.
39. **Demand exceeding capacity:** Higher than expected need could lead to oversubscription or pressure on resources. Mitigation: Ongoing monitoring of placement demand, flexible staffing models, and integration with the wider SEND sufficiency strategy.

Background papers

- Capital Strategy Report 2026/27 - 2028/29.
- SEND Sufficiency Strategy May 2024.
- SEND and AP Improvement Plan 2025.
- Belonging Strategy 2025.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Outcome of the Consultation Paper – Winchelsea School Proposal to Establish a new SEND Satellite Unit and Nursery and expand Post-16 Places.