



Saffron Walden County High School

Saffron Academy Trust

Audley End Road
Saffron Walden
CB11 4UH

Telephone: (01799) 513 030
email: info@swchs.net
web: www.swchs.net

Headteacher:
Ms Polly Lankester MA (Cantab)

1st April 2025

Dear Parents and Carers

Response to consultation on a new enhanced provision to support students with cognition and learning needs from Years 7-13 at Saffron Walden County High School.

Thank you so much to everyone who chose to respond to our consultation. We had 157 responses. Of those, 145 were supportive of the proposed provision, 7 were neutral about the proposal, and 5 were negative.

We are grateful to all those who took the time to respond.

There were so many very positive comments about the education and support provided at SWCHS and the inclusive approach to education that we provide. We are very proud of the education at SWCHS and I am delighted that attendance for children with SEND, including children with EHCPs, is well above the national levels, that reviews of our provision and analysis of annual reviews shows that the vast majority of children with additional needs, including the high number of children with EHCPs, are happy at SWCHS and making great progress from their starting points.

It was also clear from the positive comments that there is a strong demand from parents of children in local primary schools for this kind of provision as it will provide more choice for children with SEND in this area.

There were some questions raised about the provision, and I hope to provide answers to those below:

- This provision would be in addition to the existing Special Schools in Essex and Cambridgeshire and does not seek to replace them. The Local Authority is also looking to expand the capacity of Special Schools in the county.
- This provision is helping the Local Authority to deliver their SEND strategy of ensuring children can access appropriate provision in state schools in their local communities. The Local Authority strategy aims to place further enhanced provisions to support other areas of need in other schools, which will ensure that there is more choice as well as meeting needs.



- This provision would be for children whose parents **apply** for them to be a part of the provision and where the Local Authority and school agree with the parents that this is the right provision to meet individual needs.
- The reason for focusing this provision on children with cognition and learning needs where parents wish them to be educated within a mainstream setting is that a number of children within the existing school would benefit from this provision and it is this area of need that is leading other children not currently at SWCHS to have to travel the furthest to access the most suitable provision.
- A number of children within the existing school community would have the right to move across to this provision *if their parents wished them to do so*.
- Students in the provision would have some lessons in the main school and some in the provision which would allow us to provide a more bespoke curriculum offer.
- The school will continue to meet the needs of other children with SEND fully within the main school.
- The provision would allow us to provide better support to students with cognition and learning needs in our Sixth Form as well as in Years 7-11.
- The curriculum would be developed in consultation with external specialists and looking at what is working well elsewhere, as well as making use of the existing subject specialists at SWCHS and following the expected National Curriculum and then relevant exam syllabuses.
- We will also work with parents to shape the education the provision provides.
- This provision will not impact on admissions for children without EHCPs in the wider school as the 5 places for each year group will be in addition to our existing admissions number.
- We have looked carefully at the placing of this provision on our already busy site, and we have worked with the Local Authority to evaluate a range of options. We have chosen a space close to the current Technology block which will allow the provision to feel very much a part of the wider school, as well as having sufficient space for the small group lessons and interventions that would be provided for children in the provision.
- Places in the provision would be funded separately from the existing school and so would not impact on our financial position.
- There would be no change to the education provided to children in the wider school and this provision would not change the balance of needs in classes.
- We will look at best practice at schools with existing enhanced provisions to make sure that children are integrated, supported, and welcomed in the school community and we will continue our work to support equality and inclusion for all.

When we look at the five negative responses submitted, one wished this provision to be offered to more students, one felt that all students should be fully included in mainstream classes, one felt that SWCHS does not have the right approach to the education of children with SEND, one felt the information provided was not sufficient and that a separate building might act against inclusion goals and one was a link to an open letter that has been circulating on social media. This letter states that it has 23 signatures, but these names have not been shared with us. If all of those signatures were counted and those individuals have not already contributed to the consultation, it would mean that there were 180 responses overall with 16% of those consulted stating that they are negative about this proposal, and 81% stating that they are in favour. We do not believe this letter gives an accurate description of practice at SWCHS. The letter calls for transparency and questions elements of our



provision. I would like to reassure members of our community that we conduct annual reviews that include external consultants. These reviews include analysing progress data, achievement data, attendance data, and both rewards and sanctions data. They also involve talking to groups of students, looking at survey results, examining feedback from parents (from forums, annual reviews and surveys), observing lessons, and scrutinising planning documentation. The Ofsted team who visited in March 2024 also gave considerable time to examining the education and support we provide to students with SEND. All of this scrutiny has emphasised the excellent quality of the provision at SWCHS for children with SEND. Our SEND spend is audited and always fully utilised in providing support to our students. Some of the resources identified in the letter as being desirable for us to have would be addressed by having this enhanced provision. We would always encourage parents, and particularly parents of children with additional educational needs, to look at policies and visit schools to help them decide which local school is most suitable for their child. I am happy to meet with any of the representatives from this group to discuss our vision, to show them around the school so they can see what we do, and to explain why we think that our plans will improve our support for children with additional cognition and learning needs.

We care deeply about the education we provide to all children in our community, and we always seek to improve. SWCHS is unique in the level of investment through capital being made by Essex County Council (ECC) and that is a clear indication of ECC's faith in our offer.

I hope that the information provided in this letter alleviates concerns.

We will now continue to work with the Local Authority to establish this enhanced provision and we will share our progress with you.

Yours sincerely



Polly Lankester

HEADTEACHER

