

Introduction

Essex County Council (ECC) has a statutory duty to ensure that there is a sufficient supply of school places for every child in Essex who requires one. Whilst there is no requirement to have special schools or specialist provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), the majority of local authorities do have special schools and specialist provisions.

The following pressures have driven the requirement for significant investment in new places in Essex, both through the development of new schools and through the expansion of existing schools:

- A consistently high number of pupils with SEND cannot have their needs met in Essex schools and are subsequently educated in independent schools at high cost to both the High Needs Block of the Essex Dedicated Schools Grant and ECC budgets.
- The number of children and young people in Essex special schools have grown consistently since the SEND reforms of 2015 and have placed severe pressure on capacity as a consequence.
- Mainstream schools in Essex do educate a higher percentage of pupils with an Education Health Care Plan but many pupils with higher needs are currently being kept in provision which is not appropriate to their needs.
- The requirement to place pupils and parents/carers at the heart of planning and provision for SEND.

Essex County Council want to know your views on a proposal to create an Additional Resource Provision (ARP) for children with severe learning difficulties (SLD) at Hazelmere Infant School in Colchester. There has been a significant increase of children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in North-East Essex and Colchester. This upward trend is predicted to continue and is also being seen across the country. Our SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) data tells us that we need to create additional places to cater for children with SEND.

I invite you to let me have your views on this proposal. All the views expressed will be taken into account by the Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability when he decides whether to publish a statutory notice about the expansion.



Clare Kershaw
Director, Education

BACKGROUND

Given the increasing demand for specialist provision and the limited number of places currently available, there is a clear need to create more places within mainstream schools. ECC's SEND Sufficiency Plan sets out a four-tiered approach to ensuring that there is appropriate provision available for children and young people with special educational needs across the county. ECC has shared this plan with mainstream primary and secondary schools as well as with parents via the Essex Family Forum. Mainstream schools with the necessary expertise and capacity have been invited to express interest in creating an ARP in their school. This proposal has been developed by Hazelmere Infant School and Nursey and Essex County Council. It sets out the plan to create a much needed SEND provision for children with severe learning difficulties whereby differences in learning inhibit their ability to access mainstream curriculum and environment. Hazelmere Infant School and Nursey caters for children aged 4 to 7 years and offers 60 places each year (a total of 180 places across Reception to Year 2). The school is rated 'Good' by Ofsted and has developed its own internal provision for the rising number of children with Education, Health Care Plans. As of May 2025, there are 17 children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) on roll at Hazelmere. The school's website can be found here: [Hazelmere Infant School and Nursery - Home](#)

How Can You Make Your Views Known?

ECC is seeking the views of all interested persons about the proposal to create an Additional Resourced Provision at Hazelmere Infant School. At this stage no decision has been made on the expansion proposal and all the views received will be considered prior to a decision being taken as to whether to go ahead with the proposal.

This consultation is about whether you think that an additional resourced provision at Hazelmere Infant School is needed, given the predicted increase in the number of local children needing specialist provision.

If the additional resourced provision is approved additional accommodation will be needed at the school. To ensure that the local community understands the new building's potential implications, the County Council will undertake a pre-application exhibition at the school once design work on the new accommodation is sufficiently advanced. Parents and members of the local community will be given the opportunity to review the latest draft proposals and to provide feedback prior to submission to the County Planning Authority as a full planning application, should the expansion go ahead.

The proposed provision and decision process is outlined below.

You are invited to respond to this consultation using the following electronic survey form:

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/school-organisation/hazelmere>

You may also send feedback and comments to:

SEND Strategy and Innovation
senstrategy@essex.gov.uk
County Hall
Market Road
Chelmsford CM1 1QH

All comments received through these mechanisms or made directly to council officers or members will be collected and included in the analysis of feedback received.

If you have any questions or would like further information about the consultation process or the expansion proposal you email Ralph Holloway, Head of SEND Strategy and Innovation at senstrategy@essex.gov.uk . Alternatively you may contact the chair of governors of the school, via the school office.

School Expansion Proposal

This consultation seeks views from stakeholders on a proposal to create an Additional Resource Provision (ARP) for children with severe learning difficulties whereby differences in learning inhibit their ability to access mainstream curriculum and environment. Children allocated a place at the ARP will have an Education, Health and Care Plan, which identifies severe learning difficulties (possibly including other complex needs) as the primary need. This may include other complex needs. Children will have access to specialist teaching within the ARP, as well as some access to the mainstream school setting and facilities. If this proposal is agreed the ARP will provide 16 places for children with severe learning difficulties whereby differences in learning inhibit their ability to access mainstream curriculum and environment by the Autumn term of 2025.

How will the ARP at Hazelmere be set up?

ARPs specialise in providing focused and specific education for SEND needs and will often have dedicated classrooms and other facilities within the school as well as qualified SEND professionals. Where appropriate, children typically spend most of their time in the ARP and some of the remaining time with their mainstream peers.

The Hazelmere Infant School and Nursey ARP will support severe learning difficulties whereby differences in learning inhibit their ability to access mainstream curriculum and environment. The children in the ARP will be supported across two classes with a SEND teacher and additional support staff.

At Hazelmere Infant School and Nursey, the balance of time spent in the ARP and with mainstream peers will be regularly reviewed and adjusted according to the learning needs of the child. If a child has severe learning difficulties, they may spend most of their time in the ARP while attending special and selected events the child will successfully engage with and enjoy.

Admission to the ARP

The allocation of places for the ARP will be made by the Local Authority's Education, Health and Care Panel using agreed admissions criteria. 16 ARP places will be provided covering all year

groups (Reception to Year 2). All children will have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) identifying severe learning difficulties as the primary need, or, in the absence of an EHCP will be known to the LA to have needs that meet this criteria. The ARP places will be in addition to the school's Published Admissions Number (PAN).

Transport Arrangements

Transport arrangements would remain in line with the home to school transport policies of Essex County Council. The school will review and update its existing Travel Plan and will work to encourage sustainable methods of travel to school such as walking, scooting and cycling.

Building Work

The intention is that construction works will be implemented to provide an adaptive primary SEN classroom, resources/small sensory room, large sensory room, accessible hygiene room with toilet and shower, separate ambulant toilet, toilet with changing facilities, cleaners store and plant room.

Site surveys, and detailed design work, are being undertaken which will lead to a proposed design for the additional accommodation. Once the design for the new accommodation is sufficiently advanced, ECC propose to undertake a pre-application exhibition at the school. Parents and members of the local community will be given the opportunity to review the latest draft proposals and to provide feedback. ECC will consider all comments received prior to submitting a detailed planning application to the County Planning Authority. A summary of the pre-application consultation responses will also accompany the submitted planning application.

Funding

The County Council has made provision in its Capital Programme for the proposed additional resourced provision. The Council publishes its capital programme at www.essex.gov.uk.

What happens next?

At the end of this consultation period the Cabinet Member for Education Excellence, Lifelong Learning and Employability will consider all feedback and views expressed by interested parties during the consultation and will make a decision on whether to proceed with the school expansion proposal. The governing body of the school will also consider the feedback from this consultation and decide if it still wishes to support the proposal.

Timeline

The consultation period will run from 16th June 2025 to 14th July 2025. Below is the expected timeline for the decision process:

16 th June 2025	Consultation commences
23 rd June 2025	Meetings for parents, staff and the local community to be held at the school at 4pm
14 th July 2025	End of consultation period
August 2025	Decision by ECC on whether to publish a Statutory Notice
September 2025	Publication of Statutory Notice (if decision above is to proceed with the expansion process)
October 2025	End of four week period for representations
November 2025	Decision taken by Essex County Council on expansion proposal
* 1 January 2026	New ARP established at Hazelmere Infant School

* This stage will apply only if the proposal is approved by the County Council.

All written comments should be received by ECC by 14th July 2025. ECC handles information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 and is the data controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998. Your responses to this consultation will only be used to assess the community's view of the proposed amalgamation and not for any other purpose. We will not give information about you to anyone outside the County Council.

The information contained in this leaflet can be made available in alternative formats: large print, Braille, audio tape or disk. Please email senstrategy@essex.gov.uk.

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