

Statutory notice

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON

Perseid School – new specialist provision for children with Communication Needs

Notice is hereby given in accordance with Section 19 (1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 that the London Borough of Merton is proposing to expand Perseid School, Bordesley Road, Morden, SM4 5LT with effect from 1 September 2025. The school is set on two campuses in Morden - one primary age (3-11) and one secondary age (11-19).

The proposed expansion will provide an additional 28 places for children aged 3-11. This will increase the total capacity of Perseid School from 168 places to 196 places. Admission to the provision will be decided by the Council's SEN Panel.

The London Borough of Merton will implement the proposals.

This notice is an extract of the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be viewed at <http://www.merton.gov.uk/consultations.htm> Alternatively you can request a printed copy of the complete proposal from the address below or telephone 020 8545 3269.

Within four weeks from the date of publication of these proposals, any person may object to, or make comment upon the proposals, by sending their representations to: Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families (FAO: Paul Stemp, Admissions Manager), London Borough of Merton, Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, SM4 5DX or by emailing: School.Consult@merton.gov.uk

Jane McSherry
Executive Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families
London Borough of Merton
Civic Centre
London Road
Morden SM4 5DX

Date: 25 April 2024

Explanatory Notes

Perseid School is a community special school providing for children aged 3-19 with severe and complex learning difficulties, including learners with an additional diagnosis of autism and/or additional physical and/or sensory disabilities. The current school capacity split across two campuses in Morden is 168 places.

The physical expansion of the school will be enabled by adapting and extending the building currently known as Brightwell which is currently used to provide after school hours, weekend and holiday short breaks provision (but not overnight) for children with disabilities. The new building will provide sufficient space for the additional school places and will include specialist short breaks spaces to provide at least the same number of spaces as currently provided at Brightwell. Separately to this education proposal, the council is considering the design of a newly commissioned service for 2025 and will consult stakeholders in due course.

The London Borough of Merton aims to decide whether to approve this increased SEN provision proposal in June 2024. If the Council fails to determine the proposals within two months of the end of the representation period it will pass all relevant material to the Schools Adjudicator who will determine the proposals.

Supplementary information

Description of alteration

The proposal is to implement prescribed alterations to Perseid School with effect from 1 September 2025 to provide 28 additional places for children aged 3-11 with severe and complex learning difficulties, including learners with an additional diagnosis of autism and/or additional physical and/or sensory disabilities. Admission to the provision will be decided by the Council's SEN Panel.

The school is set on two campuses in Morden - one primary age (3-11) and one secondary age (11-19). The total capacity of Perseid School across the two campuses is 168. This proposed alteration will increase the total capacity to 196.

Evidence of demand

The Merton Council area has experienced a significant increase in the number of EHCPs (Education and Health Care Plans) issued over the past seven years including increased demand for children with severe and complex learning difficulties. Benchmarking across other Local Authority areas has shown that despite a series of expansion projects in recent years Merton has less state funded specialist provision than equivalent local areas.

Merton Council is not currently balancing its High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) budget and has agreed a 'Safety Valve programme' with government to reduce its deficit with a key action being to provide more state funded specialist provision within its area. There is therefore an urgent requirement to address this need as part of the council's strategy to provide excellent quality state-funded specialist provision school placements.

Objectives (including how the proposal would retain educational standards and parental choice)

The overall objective is to provide sufficient excellent quality local school places for children with severe and complex learning difficulties, including learners with an additional diagnosis of autism and/or additional physical and/or sensory disabilities.

At its last full Ofsted inspection on 19 March 2012, Ofsted reported that Perseid School is an outstanding school in its overall effectiveness and is outstanding in all features. At its more recent 3 July 2019 it was found that the school continues to be outstanding. The view of the Head of School Improvement in Merton is that the school has the capability and capacity to provide for the additional intake for the expansion.

State funded schools provide value for money as it is considerably less expensive to provide places in state funded schools compared to providing education in independent or non-maintained provision. There are also savings in transport costs if provision is made available locally. Increasing the number of places in local specialist schools therefore meets the objective to provide suitable, high quality places to meet the growing number of children requiring specialist placement within available funding.

The proposed solution will retain standards and parental choice for children in Merton for the following reasons:

- The places for local children who require access to a specialist SEN provision will be increased following the proposed expansion of Perseid School
- Perseid School is an "Outstanding" school with the capability and capacity to expand
- Provision in this location will retain parental choice, complementing the other existing SEND provision within the borough

We have consulted the school leadership and governing board that includes parental representatives on this proposal, who are supportive with a strong motivation to see that the expansion of Perseid School is a success.

Expansion of Perseid School and short breaks provision

The physical expansion of the school will be enabled by adapting and extending the building currently known as Brightwell which is currently used to provide after school hours, weekend and holiday short breaks provision (but not overnight). The new building will provide sufficient space for the additional school places and will include specialist short breaks spaces to provide at least the same number of spaces as currently provided at Brightwell. Separately to this education proposal, the council is considering the design of a newly commissioned service for 2025 and will consult stakeholders in due course.

The effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions within the area

Providing an increased number of SEND places at Perseid School will support parental choice for local provision with no impact on other schools. There is a high demand for specialist SEND places compared to available supply.

Project costs and indication of how these will be met, including how long term value for money will be achieved

The capital cost is estimated to be £4 million.

The scheme will be funded by Merton Council through the Department for Education High Needs government capital grant.

In the long term, value for money is being achieved as the alternative of funding specialist independent/non-maintained provisions is more expensive. There are additional savings when reduction of transport costs is taken into account, and consultations with parents in recent years demonstrate that families value being able to attend excellent quality local provision within their local community.

The additional places will therefore meet the objective of ensuring sufficient suitable, high quality local specialist places are provided to meet the growing number of SEN children.

Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation

It is proposed that, subject to approval and planning permission, minor works can commence in July 2024 to enable opening on 1 September 2025, with potential phasing of the project to ensure the provision can open on time.

A statement explaining the procedure for responses: support; objections and comments

Responses should be provided within four weeks of the publication date of this proposal so by 20 May 2024 by email to School.Consult@merton.gov.uk or by post to Director of Children, Lifelong Learning and Families (FAO: Paul Stemp, School Admissions Manager), London Borough of Merton, Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, SM4 5DX
