



LEIGH
Academies Trust

Consultation Pack

Expansion of Snowfields Academy

November 2023

Education for a better world

Leigh Academies Trust is a registered company (company no. 2336587) and an exempt charity.
Carnation Road, Strood, Rochester, Kent ME2 2SX

1 The proposal

From 1st September 2024 or 1st September 2025, Leigh Academies Trust (LAT) is proposing to expand Snowfields Academy, a secondary special school for pupils aged 11-18 with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) for primary need type autism who work at, close to or within 3-4 years of age-expected levels of attainment. If approved the total capacity of the academy, currently located on two purpose-built sites in Bearsted and Cranbrook will increase from 280 to 340. There are also an additional two Local Authority commissioned "bulge" classes, one in year 7 and one in year 8, both based at Cranbrook, adding an additional 22 places. A further "bulge" class for year 7 has also been agreed, increasing the total roll by a further 34 pupils from 2024-25. A revised copy of Snowfields Academy's Statement of Provision to reflect the changes proposed here is included alongside this significant change consultation.

Concurrently, we are consulting on the closure of Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey and the S10 process for the opening of two new secondary schools: Leigh Academy Minster on the existing Oasis Academy Isle of Sheppey (Minster campus) and EKC Sheppey Secondary (Sheerness site). It is proposed that the extra 60 pupils that form part of Snowfields' expansion will be accommodated on the Minster campus in separate bespoke accommodation which will be redeveloped in collaboration with Kent County Council in time for the new satellite to open. Once complete, Snowfields Academy will grow to cover three campuses: Bearsted, Cranbrook and Minster - offering excellent opportunities for secondary-age pupils with autism across large parts of Kent.



2 Details of the proposal

More than 160 children travel off the Isle of Sheppey daily to attend PCSN/ASD special schools. 140 of those attend Meadowfield Special School in Sittingbourne. Meadowfield is under continued pressure as housing growth increases local population demands. Satellite provisions of Meadowfield have been established at Sunny Bank Primary (16 places) and are in the process of being established at Fulston Manor Academy (20 places). Fourteen children currently travel from Sheppey to Snowfields Academy.

Additional ASD provision on the Island would both benefit children who would not have to spend considerable time travelling and would also provide capacity in Meadowfield School to meet growing local population demands. In addition, Kent County Council, as part of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent, indicates a 27% increase in ASD diagnosis in the Swale area alone between 2023 and 2030, representing an increase of 139 students with ASD aged 11 to 18 within the area.

Figure 1: ASD 11-18 year olds

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
ASH	249	299	335	358	378	397	411	424	426	424
CAN	310	343	387	413	437	458	475	490	492	490
DAR	287	343	375	401	423	444	460	475	477	474
DOV	233	283	316	338	357	374	388	400	402	400
F&H	276	315	325	347	367	385	399	411	413	411
GRA	287	327	337	360	380	399	413	427	428	426
MAI	287	324	367	392	414	435	450	465	466	464
SEV	242	300	323	345	365	383	396	409	410	409
SWA	376	459	523	559	590	619	642	662	665	662
THA	373	403	419	448	473	496	514	530	532	530
T&M	244	282	308	329	348	365	378	390	391	390
TW	173	197	216	231	244	256	265	273	274	273
Outside	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	3,337	3,875	4,231	4,520	4,776	5,010	5,190	5,356	5,377	5,353

2 Details of the proposal (cont.)

Despite the current situation and considering targets to bring Kent's position in line with national and statistical neighbour averages by implementing the actions outlined in Kent's Safety Valve case, analysis demonstrates that additional special school provision is required to meet future demand from a growing population in some parts of Kent. This demand is linked to population growth from housing developments, providing capacity where there are children and young people having to travel considerable distances outside their local area and also linked to the readjustment of special school placements from the independent special school sector (high cost) to the maintained special school sector (improved value for money).

Meanwhile Snowfields Academy, recently judged "Outstanding" in all areas by Ofsted across two existing sites is just 16.4 miles¹ from the proposed satellite in Minster. Snowfields achieved this judgement having opened its second (Cranbrook) campus (16.7 miles from Snowfields, Bearsted) only ten months prior to the inspection. Snowfields enjoys brand new accommodation delivered as part of the government's free school programme. Going into its fourth year of operation, and its second year on the Cranbrook campus, it is already heavily oversubscribed. Snowfields caters for pupils aged 11-18 with special educational needs who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) with primary need type autism.

If the expansion is approved, the main site of Snowfields Academy at Bearsted, satellite at Cranbrook and expansion into Minster as a further satellite will operate as one school. When full, and on the assumption that this proposal is approved, Snowfields will have 340 pupils on roll in classes of 12/13 pupils. The proposed satellite at Minster will provide for sixty students in years seven to eleven (one class per year group).

Whilst each pupil would be designated a "home campus" based on proximity to where they live, all pupils will have the opportunity to visit other

Snowfields sites where appropriate. The exact proportion of time spent visiting alternative sites to provide additional academic, pastoral and co-curricular support and experiences will vary in consultation with their parents or carers. Exceptions will be made for any pupils for whom this represents an unacceptable barrier to their learning and/or well being given the level of their autism diagnosis. The extent of integration across the sites will deepen over time.

Pupils will have the opportunity to visit the alternative site to their "home campus" in order to access specialist areas of learning. The Bearsted campus contains facilities for hospitality and horticulture; the Cranbrook campus contains a working farm. Students will also access specialist classrooms across the Minster site, where standard classrooms do not meet the resource requirements for subjects such as science, art, PE and design. Without movement between sites and access to specialist areas within the main Minster site, pupils will not be able to access the full range of vocational curriculum opportunities on offer. This arrangement will be made clear to pupils and parents at the point of admission to the academy.

Staff contracts will be varied where appropriate following consultation to enable deployment at all sites. All future staff will be employed on the basis that they can be deployed at other sites and that this can change over time in line with the needs of the academy. However, for most teaching staff, they will be designated to work at one site for the vast majority of their timetable across an academic year. Members of the middle and senior leadership team will work across all sites with a Head of College (Vice Principal) designated to take an operational lead at Minster, reporting to the Principal. The Head of College will be supported by approximately six teachers, a student support manager, behaviour lead and wider team of support staff. Despite where they spend the majority of their time, all middle and senior leaders will take responsibility for whole academy strategic areas across sites.

¹ Distance of proposed Minster campus from existing Snowfields Bearsted campus.

All policies will be consistent across sites including safeguarding, behaviour and teaching and learning. The curriculum will be consistent for all pupils regardless of which site is designated as their “home”. This will be delivered via the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Programme with consistent unit plans and assessment arrangements for every subject. The mission, vision and values will be the same across all sites with all members of staff working hard to ensure consistency whether based at Bearsted, Cranbrook or Minster.

The management of whole academy activities such as open events, parents evenings, staff training and some co-curricular provision will be consistent across sites. Technology will be used wherever possible to ensure

opportunities for virtual interaction to connect sites together. In line with other LAT centres, all pupils will be issued with their own Chromebook at no cost to their families. This will enable them to access the LAT online Google learning platform and curriculum resources regardless of which campus they attend.

The academy will be led by a single Principal and leadership team. The Principal will report in turn to a single governing body which will govern the whole academy, plus Bearsted Primary which is co-located with the Snowfields campus at Bearsted. This arrangement is the same as now. The governing body will operate as a sub-committee of the LAT Board.

3 The need for additional SEN places

KCC’s latest Commissioning Plan shows that the number of pupils with an EHCP for autism is rising considerably. 17,733 young people in Kent have an EHCP of which 42.4% are specifically for autism. In the period 2018 to 2022, the number of young people with an EHCP for autism rose by 113%.

Moreover, the group experiencing the highest EHCP percentage growth is young people aged 11-16. The area of Kent with the highest number of students diagnosed with ASD is Swale, the area in which the Minster campus is located. Kent’s Commissioning Plan suggests that current numbers are likely to grow by 27% between 2023 and 2030.

Locating this expansion within the area of greatest EHCP growth will enable KCC to achieve its stated goal of “avoiding transporting SEN pupils far away from their local communities” in order to attend school. The expansion of Snowfields will help KCC to address each of the significant EHCP growth areas summarised below.

- Primary need type - autism;
- Age range - 11-16; and
- Location - Swale.

LAT has engaged fully with KCC and the Department for Education (DfE) on this proposal which represents significant value for money and can be made available at relatively short notice. The plan will make extra high-quality provision available quickly for some of Kent’s most vulnerable young people with SEN.

4 How to have your say

We are consulting with a range of parties as set out in the relevant DfE guidance. A separate equalities impact assessment is available on request. The consultation starts on Monday 6th November for four school weeks and will end on Monday 4th December at 5.00pm. You can contribute your views via the attached [Google Form](#).

Alternatively, you can write to Leigh Academies Trust at:

Carnation Road
Strood
Rochester
Kent
ME2 2SX

There will be no adverse effect on the local community if this proposal is approved. The site at Minster will continue to be used for education as it is now. The Snowfields Minster campus will be co-located with Leigh Academy Minster for which a separate, concurrent consultation is being launched. Opening this third Snowfields campus will reduce the distance many pupils with an EHCP for autism have to travel to school each day. This is likely to reduce the transport impact and cost compared to the situation as it is now with most Snowfields pupils travelling to school via KCC-provided transport.



Simon Beamish
Chief Executive



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