



OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

FULL STATUTORY PROPOSAL

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England)
Regulations 2013

Expansion of Northfield (special) School

1. School and LA details

School: Northfield School

Address: Knights Rd, Oxford OX4 6DQ

Local Authority: Oxfordshire County Council

2. Description of alteration

Northfield School provides up to 76 places for pupils aged 10-18 (although no post-16 pupils are currently enrolled). The school is co-educational (although currently no girls are enrolled).

Oxfordshire County Council, working with the leadership team of the school, proposes to expand Northfield School to a capacity of 108 places, subject to an academy sponsor being appointed to run the school.

To accommodate this expansion, the county council would rebuild the school with purpose-built accommodation.

3. Evidence of demand

On 18 December 2018, Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet approved a new *Special Educational Needs & Disability Sufficiency of Places Strategy* to ensure sufficient school places are provided for children and young people with SEND as Oxfordshire's population grows. This strategy sets out how an emerging shortage of special school provision, especially for pupils with additional Social, Emotional & Mental Health needs (SEMH), is resulting in an increased use of high-cost independent & non-maintained special school placements, resulting in a growing High Needs block revenue pressure and overspend. The shortage of special school places is also affecting the county's ability to complete an Education and Health Care Plan for pupils with SEND within the required 20-week period.

Having considered the evidence presented in the Strategy, Cabinet gave in-principle approval to the expansion of Northfield School, as one strand of increasing special school provision, subject to the approval of this statutory proposal.

4. Objectives

In November 2018, Northfield School was inspected by Ofsted and rated "Inadequate". As such, it is required to become an academy to receive additional support from an academy sponsor. If no academy sponsor can be appointed for a school rated "Inadequate", then a proposal to close the school would be made.

If an academy sponsor can be appointed for Northfield School, the county council believes that part of the strategic plan to improve the quality of education would be expanding the school, and rebuilding it to provide purpose-built accommodation meeting the needs of its pupils. To make any future academy conversion process as straightforward as possible, the county council would approve the expansion before the school converts. It is therefore publishing this proposal to expand the school, subject to an academy sponsor being appointed. Pupil numbers at the school would only rise in line with the accommodation available, and the school would not reach its full size until the new building is open, expected to be in 2021/2022.

Northfield School's existing accommodation has significant suitability and condition issues which limit the operation of the school, and has required significant investment over the last year to maintain. Rebuilding and expanding the school would be a key component of Oxfordshire's SEND Sufficiency Strategy.

The proposed alteration would:

- Support the improvement programme at Northfield School by providing purpose-built accommodation;
- Provide more special school places for Oxfordshire's growing pupil population;
- Make it easier and quicker to place pupils with SEMH needs in appropriate education;
- Reduce the county council's expenditure on high cost places at independent schools.

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

Due to the existing and growing shortage of special school places for pupils with additional SEMH needs, the expansion of Northfield School is not expected to have a detrimental effect on existing maintained schools. It is expected that this expansion would reduce the number of places the county council needs to purchase at independent & non-maintained special schools. It is expected to be supportive for local mainstream schools, who will be able to more easily access the necessary specialist education for pupils with additional SEMH needs currently on their rolls.

6. Project costs and funding

Oxfordshire County Council's cabinet (18 December 2018) has committed to fund the rebuild of Northfield School through the allocation of £9.52m capital budget within the council's capital programme.

(<http://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=5414>)

7. Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation

This proposal to expand Northfield School will only be implemented if an academy sponsor is appointed by the Secretary of State.

The design of the new school building is underway, and it is currently expected that the school's rebuild will be completed in 2021/2022. Until then, the school would continue operating in its current accommodation. Although pupil numbers can only grow significantly once the new building is complete, the county council wishes to formally expand the school before it converts to an academy. It will then commission places on a year-by-year basis in line with the school's accommodation.

8. Objections and comments

Comments or objections must be received by the local authority by **14/06/2019**.

Respond by:

- using the online questionnaire at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consultations
- or emailing school.planning@oxfordshire.gov.uk (*please quote 'Northfield Expansion' in the header*)
- or in writing to **Joanne Booker, Access to Learning, Oxfordshire County Council, County Hall, Oxford OX1 1ND**

9. Decision-making

The decision-maker for this proposed expansion is Oxfordshire County Council. The decision will be made by the Cabinet Member for Education and Cultural Services at a meeting which is open to the public, and publicised on the county council's website. The decision must be made within a period of two months of the end of this representation period, and is currently expected on 10 July 2019.