

Service and Community Impact Assessment (SCIA)

Front Sheet:

Directorate and Service Area:

**People
Sufficiency & Access**

What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change):

Expansion of John Watson School

Responsible owner / senior officer:

Barbara Chillman

Date of assessment:

July 2020

Summary of judgement:

Oxfordshire County Council, working with the leadership team of the school, proposes to expand John Watson School by 16 places from September 2022 onward. This would increase the overall capacity of the school from 91 to 107 places.

The proposed expansion would improve access to special education for the local community, and would therefore have a positive impact for the local community.

Detail of Assessment:

Purpose of assessment:

Due to population growth and an increase in demand for special school places across Oxfordshire, expansion of John Watson School is proposed as part of Oxfordshire County Council's Special Educational Needs & Disability Sufficiency of Places Strategy. This SCIA is intended to provide an assessment to guide the process of expanding the school.

You should also include the following statement to clearly set out the reasons and context for undertaking the assessment:

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 ("the 2010 Act") imposes a duty on the Council to give due regard to three needs in exercising its functions. This proposal is such a function. The three needs are:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not.

Complying with section 149 may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but only to the extent that that does not amount to conduct which is otherwise unlawful under the new Act.

The need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages which are connected to a relevant protected characteristic and which are suffered by persons who share that characteristic,
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and which are different from the needs other people, and
- encourage those who share a relevant characteristic to take part in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.
- take steps to meet the needs of disabled people which are different from the needs of people who are not disabled and include steps to take account of a person's disabilities.

The need to foster good relations between different groups involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability

- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex
- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership

Social Value

Under the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 the Council also has an obligation to consider how the procurement of services contracts with a life value of more than £173,934¹¹ might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the area affected by the proposed contract, and how it might act to secure this improvement. However, it is best practice to consider social value for all types of contracts, service delivery decisions and new/updated policies. In this context, 'policy' is a general term that could include a strategy, project or contract.

Context / Background:

Special school capacity is being planned strategically across Oxfordshire, guided by the Special Educational Needs & Disability Sufficiency of Places Strategy approved by Oxfordshire County Council's Cabinet on 18 December 2018. This strategy sets out how an emerging shortage of special school provision 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. The proposed expansion of John Watson School by 2022 is one of the actions noted in the Strategy.

Proposals:

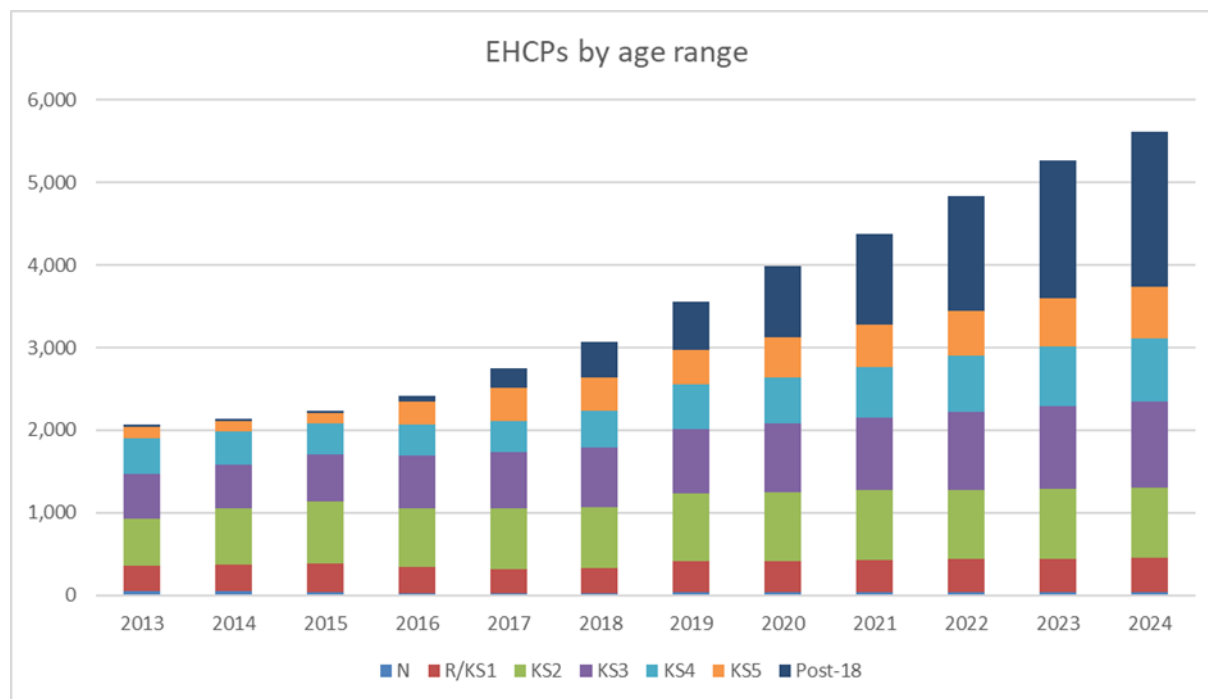
John Watson School in Wheatley is a community special school for pupils aged 2-19 with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties. It is proposed to expand the secondary age range at John Watson School by 16 places from September 2022 onward. This would increase the overall capacity of the school from 91 to 107 places. This follows on from a recent project to also expand the primary age range by the same amount.

Evidence / Intelligence:

¹¹ [EC Procurement Threshold for Services](#)

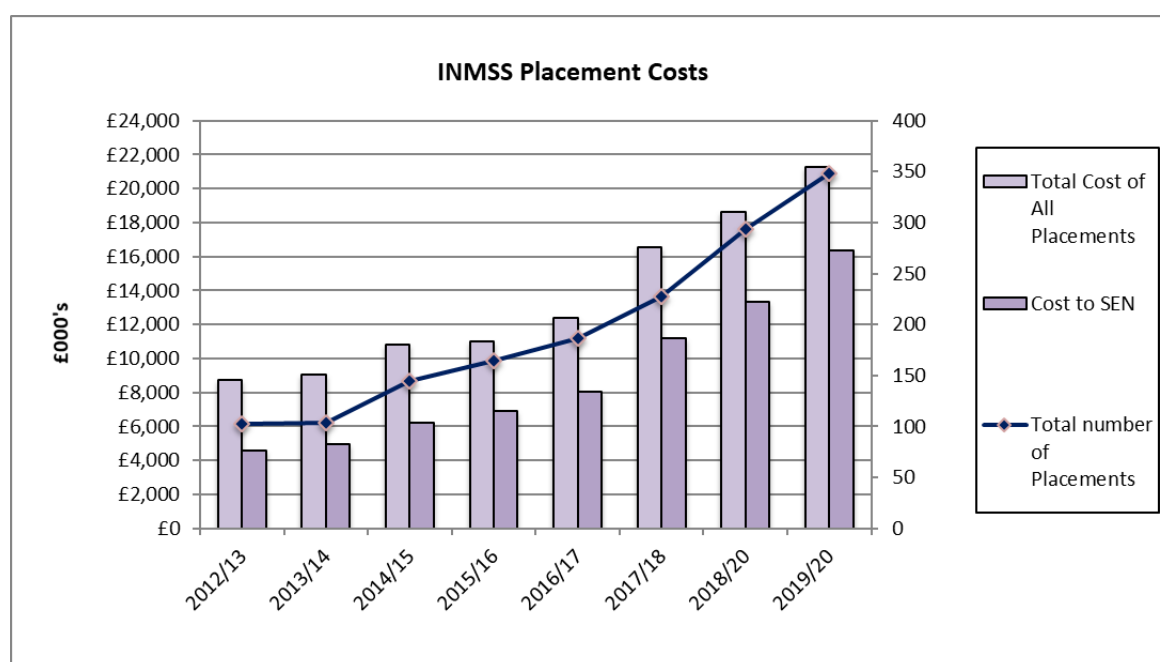
Demand for special education provision has risen rapidly in recent years, and is projected to continue to do so.

Past and projected EHCPs maintained by age range, 2013-2024 (assuming recent trends in EHCP incidence continue):



A shortage of special school provision has led to a sharp increase in the reliance on high-cost Independent & Non-Maintained Special Schools.

Independent & Non-Maintained Special School placements and costs 2012/13 – 2019/20:



Alternatives considered / rejected:

The county council has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places for children with special educational needs and disabilities. Given the current and expected growth in the numbers of pupils requiring such provision, doing nothing would have led to failure to meet this statutory duty, and/or continued unsustainable overspends on the High Needs Budget.

The expansion of John Watson School is only one strand of the Special Educational Needs & Disability Sufficiency of Places Strategy; other special schools either have been, or are being expanded. In addition new schools are planned for the north and south of the county, and Orion Academy in Oxford is being rebuilt and expanded.

Impact Assessment:

Impact on Individuals and Communities:

Age

The proposed expansion will help to enable pupils with SEND to attend a school close to where they live, and will therefore have a positive impact.

Disability

The expansion of this special school will have a positive impact on provision for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, as more special school places will be available, facilitating the timely completion of EHCPs.

Rural communities

Rural communities, as a result of the more dispersed population, typically face longer travel distance to special schools than for urban areas. John Watson's location will facilitate access to special education for a large rural area.

No specific impact has been identified on the following groups:

- Religion/belief
- Sex
- Gender reassignment
- Race/nationality
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Areas of deprivation

Risks	Mitigations
Insufficient special school places are created at the expanded school	Annual pupil forecasting and close cooperation with district councils to

	<p>forecast as accurately as possible future demand.</p> <p>The Special Educational Needs & Disability Sufficiency of Places Strategy also includes other actions to ensure sufficient special education places.</p>
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Impact on Staff:

Staff

Where special schools have to turn away children due to a shortage of capacity, staff may experience stress, and negative behaviour from angry and upset parents.

Risks	Mitigations
<p>Insufficient school places are created at the expanded school, resulting in staff experiencing negative responses from parents.</p>	<p>Annual pupil forecasting and close cooperation with district councils to forecast as accurately as possible future demand.</p> <p>The Special Educational Needs & Disability Sufficiency of Places Strategy also includes other actions to ensure sufficient special education places.</p>

Impact on other Council services:

Other council services

Transport – if special school places are not available close to where children live, pupils with SEND face longer journeys to school.

Risks	Mitigations
<p>There is a mismatch between where school places are available and where parents live, resulting in increased traffic and transport costs.</p>	<p>Annual pupil forecasting and close cooperation with district councils to forecast as accurately as possible future demand.</p> <p>The Special Educational Needs & Disability Sufficiency of Places Strategy also includes other actions to ensure sufficient special education places.</p>

Impact on providers:

Providers: schools

If there are insufficient special school places, children with SEND may not be able to access suitable provision, increasing pressure on mainstream schools.

Risks	Mitigations
Insufficient school places are created at the expanded school, resulting in mainstream schools needing to keep pupils on roll whose needs require more specialist education.	Annual pupil forecasting and close cooperation with district councils to forecast as accurately as possible future demand. The Special Educational Needs & Disability Sufficiency of Places Strategy also includes other actions to ensure sufficient special education places. Outreach support and advice to mainstream schools.

Social Value

If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area.

How might the proposal improve the economic well-being of the relevant area?

The proposed expansion may require additional staff at the school, thus creating jobs in the area.

How might the proposal improve the environmental well-being of the relevant area?

Provision of additional school places will minimise the travel to school distance for pupils attending special school.

Action plan:

Summarise the actions that will be taken as a result of the assessment, including when they will be completed and who will be responsible. It is important that the officer leading on the assessment follows up to make sure the actions are completed, and updates the assessment as appropriate. Any significant risks identified should also be added to the appropriate service or directorate risk register, to ensure they are appropriately managed and reviewed.

Action	By When	Person responsible
Statutory notice on expansion consultation	19 June – 17 July 2020	Barbara Chillman
Decision on expansion consultation	9 September 2020	Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural Services
Increase in the school's admission (if approved by Cabinet Member for Education & Cultural Service)	1 September 2022	Jayne Howarth

Monitoring and review:

Try to be as specific as possible about when the assessment will be reviewed and updated, linking to key dates (for example when consultation outcomes will be available, before a Cabinet decision, at a key milestone in implementation)

Person responsible for assessment:

Version	Date	Notes (e.g. Initial draft, amended following consultation)
2020.1	July 2020	Initial draft
2020.2	September 2020	Review following statutory decision