

Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation

3 July 2026

Mabel Prichard Special School, Oxford – Funding Agreement with The Gallery Trust

Report by: Deputy Chief Executive (S151 Officer)

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet Member is **RECOMMENDED** to

- a) **Approve the sealing of a Funding Agreement between the Council and The Gallery Trust. The Funding Agreement will enable The Gallery Trust to draw down funding from the council for remodelling of classroom accommodation and other associated works to facilitate the expansion of Mabel Prichard School, a special school academy in Oxford.**

Executive Summary

1. Mabel Prichard Special School is an academy, under the management of The Gallery Trust (TGT).
2. Due to increasing pressure for special school places in the County. The council agreed with TGT that they would increase the school's admission number at Mabel Prichard School and deliver 23 additional spaces.
3. TGT are self-delivering the expansion project using funding provided by the council through a funding agreement. The anticipated completion date is summer 2027.
4. The expansion will be achieved by remodelling and refurbishing the recently vacated foundation stage accommodation at Orchard Meadow School - for Mabel Prichard School. The project will deliver three new classrooms, pupil toilets, a group room, and ancillary accommodation. It also includes the creation of an improved entrance, office space, staff room, and supporting accommodation, and provides additional car parking and enhanced highway access to the school.
5. The Outline Business Case, with a total capital budget of £1.900m was approved on 7th August 2025. The Full Business Case will be submitted for approval in August 2026.

6. TGT commissioned their consultants Wainwrights to procure a main contractor to enter into a Pre-Construction Service Agreement and tendered the project, seven contractors compliantly responded to the first stage tender with Beard Construction being the successful contractor to work with the design team to develop a contract sum which will form part of the project budget. TGT are about to procure the services of Beard Construction to commence construction.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

7. This proposed course of action supports Oxfordshire's Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND) Sufficiency Delivery Strategy which identifies the expansion of Mabel Prichard Special School as a Delivery Priority 2023-2027.

Financial Implications

The financial implications section should be completed by a member of the finance service

8. The capital funding for this project has been approved as part of the capital programme funded from the budget provision identified for the SEN Strategy Phase 2 provision of £37m, with the most recent project budget being approved as part of the Outline Business Case in August 2025.
9. A Full Business Case is due to be submitted in August 2026 for approval with an estimated total capital budget exceeding £2m. The project is to be funded from the SEN High Needs capital allocation 2021/22 - 2023/24.
10. There are no revenue implications to the council because all revenue costs are the responsibility of TGT.
11. Should the recommended course of action not be followed, there will be a delay to the completion of the Funding Agreement resulting in TGT not being able to enter the construction contract and additional costs will be incurred as a result, and ultimately a delay to the delivery of the accommodation for the additional pupil intake.

Comments checked by:

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Legal Implications

The legal implications section should be completed by a member of the legal service

12. The Council has a statutory duty including under section 14(1) of the Education Act 1996 to secure additional school places for children within the County. This funding arrangement to The Gallery Trust will enable the Council to fulfil its statutory function.
13. The Gallery Trust is an Academy Trust engaged in the provision of education to children, pursuant to receipt of funding from Central Government. The benefit it will receive from the building works will enable it to fulfil this function. As such, it is not engaged in an economic activity and therefore, the funding arrangement does not constitute a subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act 2022.
14. Under the terms of the funding agreement, in selecting contractors and consultants for the building works, the Gallery Trust will be required to go through a procurement process which would be compliant with public procurement legislation. This will ensure that the Works Contracts represent value for money and comply with the Council's obligations under procurement legislation; under the Subsidy Control Act 2022; and under the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. The Gallery Trust will also be required to comply with all applicable legislation generally, in carrying out the building project.

Comments checked by:

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Staff Implications

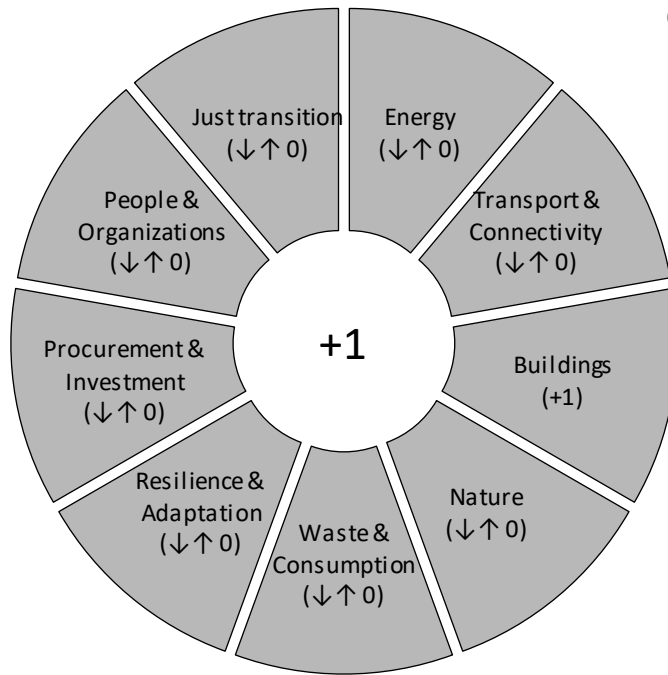
15. The project budget includes an allowance for internal staff costs for Legal; for the Funding Agreement, and Property to ensure the project is delivered to the required standards within the project programme and budget, as agreed in the Full Business Case.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

16. The project does not have any equality and inclusion implications with no change to current operations.

Sustainability Implications

17. The project has limited scope regarding sustainability implications. Re-use and refurbishment of the existing school building have been used to reduce embodied carbon in the proposal. A Climate Impact Assessment has been completed for the project.



Oxfordshire Council has committed to being a carbon neutral organisation by 2030 (8 years and 0 months away).

Risk Management

18. Project risks including any impacts to the council's statutory duty to provide specialist places and budget management has been monitored and managed by the Project Lead.

Consultations

19. The proposal received full planning permission on the 26th March 2026.
20. The accommodation requirements and proposed design solutions to expand the school has been shared with TGT, the Headteacher and Governors of Mabel Prichard Special School and is fully supported.
21. As an academy, the expansion of Mabel Prichard Special School will need to be approved by the Regional Schools Director (RSD). An application has been made and approval obtained.
22. No further public consultation has been undertaken.

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Annex: Annex 1 – Approved Outline Business Case

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3rd July 2026