Hedgewood Planning Statement June 2021 Education Case

Special Schools serve around 2% of all pupils; those with a statutory Education, Health Care Plan (EHCP) agreed following professional and parent involvement and pupil assessment, which sets out the pupil's specific needs, stating only a special school can deliver this and names the. The council has a statutory duty to co-ordinate these plans and ensure the delivery of the educational and health needs they set out.

Hedgewood is the only Hillingdon primary special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and most also have autism and social communication skills, some do not speak. The pupils on roll at Hedgewood all have EHCPs stating they need this specific provision and could not attend a mainstream school or special school with a different specialism. At the last census in January 2021, the roll had risen to 183, with some pupils taught in a Unit off-site. The school is graded 'Good' by Ofsted and is highly regarded by parents. It has an accreditation report from the National Autistic Society which comments on the strong support for the emotional wellbeing and breadth of provision for pupils and the creative use of outside spaces and buildings.

The school is now full to capacity but there are 30 more pupils aged 5 and 6 needing a special school place from September 2021, recently assessed with a new EHCP with needs Hedgewood could meet. If not, placements out of the borough would have to be found which would be far less satisfactory for the pupils, their families and at an increased cost to the Council of about £27,000 per pupil each year - possibly to the end of their schooling.

The proposal is to create extra places to meet demand in two new modular units each with two classrooms, with 8 or 9 pupils each, so around 34 more pupils in total, and a similar increase in total staffing (teachers and teaching assistants.) These two units are sturdy, but temporary buildings. Some of the pupils will move on to the two special schools currently being built to open in 2024; Grand Union Village in Hayes and Pinn River all-age school on the Grangewood site in Northwood – which will both specialise in meeting the most complex of the learning difficulties and ASD pupils. Therefore in 2024 the use of these extra buildings at Hedgewood will be reviewed.

The spaces for the two double units are within the curve of external buildings around the main central school block and playground, with easy access between them and the main building and the other play areas. These two new units will be located on the grassed area with trees and bushes which extends around the perimeter of the site, with smaller huts and the polytunnel being relocated.

The land is uneven and shrubby and forms a green barrier between the school and the housing that backs onto all of the school site. Classrooms and housing do not overlook each other. The classrooms face the various outdoor spaces and the main building. The grassed areas have never been marked up or levelled as playing fields as team sports are not appropriate for the pupils. They all have difficulties with communication, social interaction and sensory issues such as extreme unease around unexpected changes, such as games where a ball or other person could suddenly touch them.

The school uses the external space extensively and has designed different secure areas adapted for a range of activities for pupils to spend considerable planned time outside in supervised small groups with staff. These include exercise on a trim track, go-karting, a sensory garden, growing vegetables and flowers in raised beds and a poly-tunnel; a small summer-house for 'forest school' activities and nature watch in the more wild, wet and muddy areas. All this helps pupils to develop their learning, communication, independence and social skills, along with therapeutic support.

In recent years increasingly the pupils have a more complex mix of health and education needs including requiring changing and personal care through the school day. The project includes updating and expanding the personal care facilities in the main building to ensure these needs are met safely and with privacy. The new buildings will each have specialised toilets and personal care/changing areas as well as small areas for quiet spaces.