

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) and our equality duty

The Equality Duty helps public bodies to deliver their overall objectives for public services, and as such should be approached as a positive opportunity to support good decisionmaking.

It encourages public bodies to understand how different people will be affected by their activities so that policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people's needs. By understanding the effect of their activities on different people, and how inclusive public services can support and open up people's opportunities, public bodies are better placed to deliver policies and services that are efficient and effective.

Complying with the Equality Duty may involve treating some people better than others, as far as this is allowed by discrimination law. For example, it may involve providing a service in a way which is appropriate for people who share a protected characteristic, such as providing computer training to all people to help them access information and services.

Whilst [the Gunning Principles](#) set out the rules for consulting with 'everyone', additional requirements are in place to avoid discrimination and inequality.

Cheshire East Council is required to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Equality Act 2010 simplified previous anti-discrimination laws with a single piece of legislation. Within the Act, the Public Sector Equality Duty (Section 149) has three aims. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, by consciously thinking about equality when making decisions (such as in developing policy, delivering services and commissioning from others)
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, by removing disadvantages, meeting their specific needs, and encouraging their participation in public life
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not

The Equality Act identifies nine 'protected characteristics' and makes it a legal requirement to make sure that people with these characteristics are protected from discrimination:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnerships
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

Applying the equality duty to engagement

If you are developing a new policy, strategy or programme you may need to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment. You may be able to ascertain the impact of your proposal on different characteristics through desk-based research and learning from similar programmes, but you also need to carry out some primary research and engagement.

People with protected characteristics are often described as ‘hard to reach’ but you will find everyone can be reached – you just need to tailor your approach, so it is accessible for them.

Please feel free to contact the [Equality and Diversity mailbox](#) who will try to help you to assess the impacts of your proposals and will ensure that you help the Council to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Section 1 – Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of a service, strategy, function or procedure

(Please delete the guidance in italics once you complete a section)

Proposal Title	Decision on the proposed expansion of Springfield School, Wilmslow, Ringstead Drive, Dean Row, Wilmslow, SK9 2HA
Date of Assessment	13.9.2024
Assessment Lead Officer Name and other officers involved	Joanne Prophet Val Simons Emma Mason
Directorate/ Service	Children and Families
Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure.	The proposal is to expand the Springfield School Wilmslow campus by 20 places for pupils between the ages of 4 – 16. The school’s current capacity is 80 pupils and the proposal is to increase this to 100. The school caters for pupils with a range of needs including Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC), Severe Learning difficulties (SLD) and Profound Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). This proposal is for implementation in September 2025.

Who is impacted?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people • Parents / carers • Schools • Neighbouring authorities
Links and impact on other services, strategies, functions or procedures.	<p>In 2023 the council published online its updated Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs. This document highlights the specialist provision necessary within the borough and provides the evidence base for the associated SEN plan 2023 – 2026.</p> <p>https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/pdf/livewell/sen/send-sufficiency-statement-for-children-and-young-people-with-special-educational-needs-2023-2026.pdf</p>
How does the service, service change, strategy, function or procedure help the Council meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty?	<p>It is a requirement, both under DfE guidance and case law, that the decision maker should consider the views expressed during consultation and take into account the Equality Impact Assessment. It is therefore imperative that full details of all views submitted are made available at the decision meeting.</p> <p>Making significant changes (prescribed alterations) to Maintained Schools January 2023</p>

Section 2 - Information – What do you know?

What do you know?	<p>Due to the nature of a special school, pupils are admitted from a wider geographical area. There is limited specialist provision within the local authority, so pupils are not always necessarily based within their local community. A number of pupils with ASC, SLD and PMLD currently travel outside of Cheshire East to attend school and it is hoped that some of these pupils would be closer to their communities by attending this school.</p>
Information you used to arrive at the decision	<p>The council's Sufficiency Statement and 3-year plan has informed the need for additional specialist places in the borough. An opportunity to provide for these additional placements at this school has been identified.</p> <p>Springfield School is a popular and successful special school and is rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. 20 additional places at this school allows for the strategic planning of additional places in this locality of the borough for SEN learners.</p>

Gaps in your Information	Nothing identified to date but will be reviewed once the feedback has been reviewed
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Section 3 - Information - What did people tell you?

What did people tell you about your proposals?	The consultation does not finish until 11 October, so no feedback received to date.
Details and dates of the consultation/s and/or engagement activities	<p>The statutory process for significant changes to a maintained special school requires the local authority to issue a public notice and commence a minimum of 4 weeks consultation period. The local authority must then consider the feedback received and decide within 2 months of the end of the consultation period and if approved, implement the proposal within the timescale.</p> <p>The statutory publication notice was published in the Manchester Weekly News – Wilmslow Edition on 12 September 2024 and the subsequent statutory four-week representation period ran from 13 September to 11 October 2024. Information was made available on the council's website and the representation period was notified to key stakeholders including ward members, the MP, Diocese, local parish and town councils and the neighbouring authorities of Trafford, Stockport and Manchester. Information was also emailed to all local schools together with a letter for distribution to their staff, governors, and parents. Notification of the consultation was also published in the council's internal School Bulletin in the week beginning 16 September.</p> <p>The feedback received due the representation period will be collated and summarised in a report to Children and Families Committee for a decision on 11 November 2024.</p>
Are there any gaps in consultation and engagement feedback?	<p>Consultation has been carried out in accordance with the DfE guidance "Making significant Changes (prescribed alterations) to maintained schools which was updated and came into force in January 2023.</p> <p>No feedback has been received to date.</p>

Section 4 - Review of information, consultation feedback and equality analysis

Protected characteristics groups from the Equality Act 2010	What do you know? <i>Summary of information used to inform the proposal</i> <u>Refer to Section 2</u>	What did people tell you? <i>Summary of customer and/or staff feedback</i> <u>Refer to section 3</u>	What does this mean? <i>Impacts identified from the information and feedback (actual and potential).</i> <i>These can be either positive, negative or have no impact.</i>
Age	The Springfield School Wilmslow campus offers places for children aged 4-18. The 20 additional places will be offered to 416 year olds and will positively impact on the number of school places for young pupils with needs and thereby increasing opportunities for parental choice of schools.	The feedback received due the representation period will be collated and summarised in a report to Children and Families Committee for a decision on 11 November 2024.	The Springfield School Wilmslow expansion, if approved, will offer places for pupils aged 4-16 and will positively impact on the number of school places for young pupils with needs and thereby increasing the parental choice of schools.

Disability	The proposal will have a positive impact on young pupils with a disability because it will provide more places in the north of the borough and reduce the possible need for children to travel out of the borough to secure a suitable place closer to their place of residence.	The feedback received due the representation period will be collated and summarised in a report to Children and Families Committee for a decision on 11 November 2024.	The proposal will have a positive impact on young pupils with a disability because the provision will provide more places in the borough and reduce the possible need for children to travel out of the borough to secure a suitable place closer to their place of residence.
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Gender reassignment	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis without reference to gender or gender reassignment.	The feedback received due the representation period will be collated and summarised in a report to Children and Families Committee for a decision on 11 November 2024.	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis without reference to gender or gender reassignment.
Pregnancy and maternity	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis without reference to the status of pupil or of the parent/carer.	The feedback received due the representation period will be collated and summarised in a report to Children and Families Committee for a decision on 11 November 2024.	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis without reference to pregnancy or maternity status.

Race/ethnicity	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis and this does not allow for any discrimination in this respect.	The feedback received due the representation period will be collated and summarised in a report to Children and Families	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis and this does not allow for any discrimination in respect of race or ethnicity.
Religion or belief	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis and religion and belief do not form part of the criterion and all applications will be considered on an equal basis	The feedback received due the representation period will be collated and summarised in a report to Children and Families Committee for a decision on 11 November 2024.	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis and religion and belief do not form part of the criterion and all applications will be considered on an equal basis irrespective of religious belief.
	irrespective of religious belief.		
Sex	The local authority has no reason to believe that the proposed expansion would result in an overall change to the current demographics of the school. Places at the school will be offered on the basis of need.	The feedback received due the representation period will be collated and summarised in a report to Children and Families Committee for a decision on 11 November 2024.	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis and sex will not form part of the criterion. Places at the school will be offered on a needs basis.

Sexual orientation	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis and this does not allow for any discrimination in this respect.	The feedback received due the representation period will be collated and summarised in a report to Children and Families Committee for a decision on 11 November 2024.	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis and this does not allow for any discrimination in respect of sexual orientation.
Marriage and civil partnership	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis without reference to the marital status of pupil or of the parent/carer.	The feedback received due the representation period will be collated and summarised in a report to Children and Families Committee for a decision on 11 November 2024	Places at a specialist school are determined purely on need. All applications are considered on an equal basis without reference to the marital status of pupil or of the parent/carer.

Section 5 - Review of information, consultation feedback and equality analysis

Mitigation	What can you do to mitigate any negative impacts or further enhance positive impacts?
<i>Please summarise the impacts listed in section 4 and what will be done to mitigate these impacts</i>	<p>The feedback received during the representation period will be collated and summarised in a report to Children and Families Committee for a decision on 11 November 2024.</p> <p>Any mitigation measures required will be assessed after 11 October once the feedback has been received and collated and any issues raised have been considered.</p>


Section 6 – Monitoring and review

Details of monitoring activities	<p>Because the expansion is not anticipated to open until September 2025 any impact on the protected characteristics will not be known until additional pupils start at the school.</p> <p>However the school already operates under an equal and inclusive policy and the local authority has no reason to believe that this will change.</p>
Date and responsible officer for the review of the EIA	The EIA will be reviewed by Val Simons, Pupil Place Planning Officer, at the end of the consultation.

Section 7 – Sign off

When you have completed your draft EIA, it should be sent to the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Mailbox](#) for review.

If your EIA is approved, it must then be signed off by a senior manager within your Department (Head of Service or above).

Name	Gill Betton
Date	18 September 2024
Signature	

Once the EIA has been signed off, please forward a copy to the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion mailbox](#) for it to be published on the website.

For Transparency, we are committed to publishing all Equality Impact Assessments relating to public engagement.

Help and support - For support and advice please contact the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion mailbox](#)