

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 Park Lane School, Macclesfield
Date of Assessment	6 th March 2025
Assessment Lead Officer Name and other officers involved	Joanne Prophet
Directorate/ Service	Children and Families

<p>Details of the service, service change, decommissioning of the service, strategy, function or procedure.</p>	<p>The proposal is to carry out remodelling work and provide additional facilities to enable 34 additional children to attend Park Lane school. The Park Lane School site would cater for up to 156 pupils aged 4-19 for pupils, with a range of needs including Severe Learning difficulties (SLD) and Profound Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD).</p> <p>This proposal is for implementation from September 2025.</p> <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 make a decision within 2 months of the end of the consultation period, if approved, implement the proposal within the timescale.</p> <p>The outcomes of consultation, which was held from 14 March 2025 to 10 April 2025 will be summarised in a report</p>
	<p>to Children and Families Committee for a decision on 9 June 2025.</p> <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>School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 School Admissions Code (2014)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfE Guidance
<p>Who is impacted?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and young people • Parents and carers • Headteachers of other SEN schools

<p>Links and impact on other services, strategies, functions or procedures.</p>	<p>The 2023-2026 Council Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs states: -</p> <p>As a partnership, Cheshire East is committed to supporting our children and young people to access the best education to meet their needs and to ensure they achieve the best possible outcomes. Having the right educational placement is key to supporting children and young people to achieve their potential and to develop the range of skills and experiences they need to equip them for adulthood. We have completed this Sufficiency Statement of our educational provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the needs of our children and young people in Cheshire East • Evaluate how well our current provision meets young people's needs and identify any gaps. • Support us to plan how we will continue to develop our provision over a three-year period starting in 2023-2026 so that we can achieve the best outcomes for our children and young people. <p>Through developing our provision, we want to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable children to achieve the best possible outcomes for children and young people. • Ensure there are the right number and type of places to meet children and young people's needs.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that children and young people can have their needs met within their local community wherever possible. • Make the best use of our resources. <p>Having the right educational placement and support is key to ensuring that children and young people experience the best outcomes. As such, the statement contributes to the authorities work across all of these priorities, but it is particularly related to priority 6; ensuring that children and young people with additional needs have better chances in life.</p> <p>To achieve the best outcomes for children, we need to plan and deliver our services with children and young people at the centre, involve them in decisions, and base our services on what children and young people need and how they tell us they want to be supported. Children, young people, parents and carers have been involved in developing this statement and will continue to be involved in developing our provision going forward.</p> <p>We want to ensure that all our children and young people achieve the best possible outcomes.</p> <p>It's also really important to us that we make the very best use of our resources so that we can provide the best quality service possible to all children and young people that need support. This means ensuring that we use our resources innovatively, match our services to the needs within our population, and also that we don't duplicate services. This also means reducing costs on any additional expenditure that doesn't contribute to children and young people's attainment or wellbeing, such as travel costs for long distance travel.</p>
<p>How does the service, service change, strategy, function or procedure help the Council meet the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty?</p>	<p>As stated above the Local Authority has identified a significant demand for more Special Educational Need school places in the borough and this proposal will help to enable Cheshire East to meet its statutory duty to ensure a sufficiency of school places for children resident in its area.</p> <p>The proposed permanent expansion provides new facilities providing reassurance to parents and providing children with the most favourable good quality learning environment.</p>

Section 2 - Information – What do you know?

What do you know?	Due to the nature of the Special School our intake serves a large population across Cheshire East. There is very limited specialist provision within the Local Authority, so pupils are not always necessarily based within their local community. A number of pupils with Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (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 as a result of this expansion proposal.
Information you used to arrive at the decision	<p>The 2023-2026 Council Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs states Cheshire East were supporting 4,029 children and young people with an EHCP, 1,455 (36%) requiring support in a specialist provision. The need for specialist provision in the secondary phase of education is 48% (694), which is much higher when compared with the primary phase of education 31% (455) and post 16 21% (306).</p> <p>17% of our children and young people with an EHCP are receiving education outside of Cheshire East. 48% of these are placed within a non-maintained special school, independent special school or specialist post 16 institute. 29% are placed within other local authority special schools (mainly neighbouring local authorities - Cheshire West, Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire).</p> <p>Based on this Cheshire East are in support of increasing the number of school places in SEN provision to alleviate the need to transport children with an EHCP out of the borough.</p>
Gaps in your Information	<p>The need for additional places in the borough has been identified within the 2023-2026 Council Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs.</p> <p>This proposal supports the local authority in its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for children resident in its area and it is believed that there are currently no gaps in the information used to arrive at this belief.</p>

Section 3 - Information - What did people tell you?

What did people tell you about your proposals?	No feedback has been received until the consultation has closed. Once the consultation has concluded, an assessment of the feedback regarding the proposal will be undertaken.
	Feedback from all sources, including feedback from groups which represent any of the nine protected characteristics, will be assessed to ensure that this assessment of impact can be used to inform any final decision.
Details and dates of the consultation/s and/or engagement activities	<p>A public notice was published in the Macclesfield Express on Wednesday 12 March 2025. The consultation period will run from 14 March 2025 until 10 April 2025.</p> <p>The council's web page goes live on 14 March 2025. The webpage includes an electronic survey and a feedback form that anyone can complete and give feedback on their views.</p> <p>Emails will be sent to all the key stakeholders including the ward members, MP's, Dioceses, Macclesfield Town Council and local parish councils. Emails will also be sent to all local surrounding schools together with a letter for them to distribute to their parents/ carers or use the information to include in a newsletter etc.</p> <p>Once the consultation closes on 10th April 2025, the feedback will be collated, and a report on the outcomes will be presented to the Children and Families Committee meeting on 2nd June 2025 for a decision.</p>
Are there any gaps in consultation and engagement feedback?	<p>The consultation undertaken for making changes to maintained schools, is governed by the DfE guidance "Making significant changes (prescribed alterations) to maintained schools", which the latest version was issued in March 2025.</p> <p>The statutory consultation has been carried out in accordance with this guidance.</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>
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			<i>These can be either positive, negative or have no impact.</i>
Age	The need for additional places in the borough has been identified by the local authority as part of the 2023-2026 Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs. This proposal supports the local authority in its statutory duty to provide sufficient SEN school places for children resident in its area	At this time the impact of change upon this group is believed to be limited. Further assessment will take place once the feedback of the consultation has been received and analysed.	The increase in school places at Park Lane school will have a number of benefits to the existing school community. In order to provide the additional places, works will include the remodelling of a classroom and providing additional facilities including toilets. This will also benefit existing pupils to ensure they have sufficient facilities in the right location when having lessons in mobiles classrooms etc.

Disability	The need for additional places in the borough has been identified by the local authority as part of the 2023-2026 Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs. This proposal supports the local authority in its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for	At this time the impact of change upon this group is believed to be limited. Further assessment will take place once the feedback of the consultation has been received and analysed.	The proposal will have a significant positive impact on those children with SLD and PMLD in the borough because of the additional places being offered. The additional places may provide local children with these needs a place closer to their home and local community.
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	children resident in its area		
Gender reassignment	The need for additional places in the borough has been identified by the local authority as part of the 20232026 Council Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs. This proposal supports the local authority in its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for children resident in its area	At this time the impact of change upon this group is believed to be limited. Further assessment will take place once the feedback of the consultation has been received and analysed.	Local authorities are bound by the SEND Code of Practice, and this does not allow for any discrimination in respect of gender.

Pregnancy and maternity	<p>The need for additional places in the borough has been identified by the local authority as part of the 2023-2026 Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs. This proposal supports the local authority in its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for children resident in its area</p>	<p>At this time the impact of change upon this group is believed to be limited.</p> <p>Further assessment will take place once the feedback of the consultation has been received and analysed.</p>	<p>Local authorities are bound by the SEND code of Practice, and this does not allow for any discrimination in this respect.</p> <p>All applications are considered on an equal basis without reference pregnancy and maternity.</p>
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Race/ethnicity	<p>The need for additional places in the borough has been identified by the local authority as part of the 2023-2026 Council Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs. This proposal supports the local authority in its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for children resident in its area</p>	<p>At this time the impact of change upon this group is believed to be limited.</p> <p>Further assessment will take place once the feedback of the consultation has been received and analysed.</p>	<p>Local authorities are bound by the SEND code of Practice, and this does not allow for any discrimination in respect of race/ethnicity.</p> <p>The local authority has no reason to believe that any increase in school places at Park Lane school would result in an overall change to the current demographics.</p>
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Religion or belief	The need for additional places in the borough has been identified by the local authority as part of the 2023-2026 Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs. This proposal supports the local authority in its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for children resident in its area	At this time the impact of change upon this group is believed to be limited. Further assessment will take place once the feedback of the consultation has been received and analysed.	Religion and belief do not form part of the arrangements for admission to a special school and all applications will be considered on an equal basis irrespective of religion or belief.
Sex	The need for additional places in the borough has been identified by	At this time the impact of change upon this group is	The local authority has no reason to believe that any proposed increase in school places would result in an

	the local authority as part of the 2023-2026 Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs. This proposal supports the local authority in its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for children resident in its area	believed to be limited. Further assessment will take place once the feedback of the consultation has been received and analysed.	overall change to the current demographics
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Sexual orientation	The need for additional places in the borough has been identified by the local authority as part of the 2023-2026 Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs. This proposal supports the local authority in its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for children resident in its area	At this time the impact of change upon this group is believed to be limited. Further assessment will take place once the feedback of the consultation has been received and analysed.	Local authorities are bound by the SEND code of Practice, and this does not allow for any discrimination in respect of sexual orientation.
Marriage and civil partnership	The need for additional places in the borough has been identified by the local authority as part of the 2023-2026 Sufficiency Statement for Children and Young	At this time the impact of change upon this group is believed to be limited. Further assessment will take place once the feedback of the consultation has	Local authorities are bound by the SEND code of Practice, and this does not allow for any discrimination in this respect. All applications are considered against the subscription criteria on an
	People with Special Educational Needs. This proposal supports the local authority in its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places for children resident in its area	been received and analysed.	equal basis without reference to the marital status 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 school would expect to accommodate an additional 34 pupils (aged 4-19).</p> <p>It is believed that this will provide benefits to the current pupils due to the additional facilities being provided.</p> <p>Increasing the number of places at Park Lane school could provide school places to pupils who live locally and who either currently have to travel significantly or out of the borough to attend their education provision.</p> <p>A public notice was published in the Macclesfield Express on the 12 March 2025. The consultation period will run from 14 March 2025 to 10 April 2025.</p> <p>Any further mitigation measures required will be assessed after 10th April 2025 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	The council will liaise with the school regarding numbers on roll.
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Date and responsible officer for the review of the EIA	The EIA will be reviewed by Emma Mason, School Organisation Monitoring and Pupil Place Planning Officer, at the start of the Spring Term 2026. The additional places and accommodation are expected to have been in place for one term at this point.
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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	Claire Williamson Director of Education, Strong Start and Intergration
Date	02.04.2025
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](#)