Consultation on a proposal to open a specialist resource base for up to 12 primary-aged pupils with an autism spectrum condition (ASC)

At Barlby Primary School, Barlby Road, W10 6BH

Additional copies of this paper may be obtained by telephoning 020 7361 2262 or from the council website
www.rbkc.gov.uk/consultation
The Royal Borough is interested in opening a specialist resource base for primary-aged pupils with an autistic spectrum condition (ASC) and needs on the autism spectrum. The base would cater for up to twelve pupils with an ASC who would benefit from a mainstream school environment, but who need access to specialist teaching and other support to access a mainstream placement. Pupils with severe needs will continue to be placed in a special school environment. The Head teacher and governors of Barlby School have agreed that the Royal Borough should seek views on this proposal. This paper explains why the proposal is being made and describes what is involved in the consultation process.

How to respond to this consultation

All consultation responses must be received by 18th December 2012. You can respond to this consultation by:
- Completing the response sheet at the end of this document;
- Sending a letter or email with your comments.

Response sheets, letters and comments should be sent to:
The Consultation Team,
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea,
FREEPOST LON 16042,
London W8 7BR
You do not need a stamp. Alternatively you can email consult@rbkc.gov.uk

An electronic copy of this document can be found at www.rbkc.gov.uk/consultation

Meetings to discuss the proposal

Parents of pupils at Barlby School and parents of pupils with an ASC attending other schools in RBKC are invited to attend meetings to discuss these proposals, at Barlby Primary School, Barlby Road W10 6BH as follows:

1. Parents of children currently attending Barlby School: **27th November at 3.45**
2. Parents of children resident in the Royal Borough who have an ASC – **28th November at 4.15**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many children have an ASC?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What provision does RBKC currently make?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What proposals are there to meet the needs of secondary aged pupils with an ASC?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a specialist resource base?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why locate the new resource base at Barlby Primary School?</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation for the resource base</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resourcing and staffing the resource base</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would the resource base operate?</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would Barlby Primary School and its pupils benefit?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which pupils would be admitted to the resource base?</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is involved in the consultation process?</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key stages in the consultation process</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Response sheet</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Over recent years there has been a significant increase in the number of children diagnosed with an autistic spectrum condition (ASC), both locally and nationally. An ASC is commonly referred to as autism.

Children with an ASC have a range of learning abilities and needs. Some children with an ASC can be supported in their local mainstream primary school and this is the case in many of the Royal Borough’s schools. Other children may need a special school setting. However, some children would benefit from access to mainstream classes and school activities, but also need additional specialist teaching and support, which may take place away from the mainstream classrooms. To support these children the Royal Borough is developing a network of specialist resource bases or autism centres. Details of how a resource base might work are given later in this paper.

Barlby Primary School in North Kensington is a popular school which is judged by Ofsted to provide an outstanding quality of education to its pupils. Discussions have been held with the Head teacher, staff and governors of the school about the possibility of establishing a specialist resource base and they have responded positively to this idea. This consultation paper sets out a proposal to develop a specialist educational resource base at Barlby Primary School, which would open in September 2013.

What is an Autism Spectrum Condition?

An ASC is a lifelong developmental disability, characterised by difficulties with social communication, social imagination and social interaction. The word ‘spectrum’ is used because, while all people with autism share these three main areas of difficulty, their ASC will affect them in different ways and to different degrees. These three areas are known as the ‘triad of impairments’ and they are as follows:

- difficulty with social communication: this might include, for example, not always understanding the meaning of

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1 The term autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) is also used, but the Royal Borough prefers to use the word ‘condition’ to avoid any negative or potentially discriminatory connotations being associated with children who have autism.
other people’s gestures, facial expressions or tone of voice;

• difficulty with social imagination: this might include having a limited range of play which may be followed rigidly and repetitively;

• difficulty with social interaction: this might include appearing aloof or indifferent to others.

Children with an ASC may have repetitive behaviour patterns, special interests which they may prefer to pursue to the exclusion of other activities, and to have a strong liking for sameness, predictability and routine. They may also have particular sensory sensitivities, for example to certain sounds or textures. Children attending mainstream schools and resource bases may experience these features in a less severe form. Where children with an ASC receive specialist teaching and support from an early age, they are often able to improve their skills to a very significant extent.

**How many children are there in RBKC with a diagnosis of ASC and a statement of special educational needs?**

In 2011 there were 103 children in the borough with a diagnosis of ASC and a statement. This figure represents an increase of over 100% on that in 2007 when there were 51 children in this category. The figure is predicted to continue rising, as it is nationally. Current evidence indicates the increase is as a result of greater awareness amongst parents and professionals about ASC, which has resulted in earlier and often more accurate identification and diagnosis.

**What provision does RBKC currently make for primary-aged pupils with an ASC?**

The provision made for pupils with an ASC depends on the severity of their difficulties. Pupils with more severe difficulties generally attend Queensmill School in Hammersmith and Fulham, or possibly the specialist unit at Fulham Primary School. Pupils attending RBKC primary schools are supported in mainstream classes by teaching assistants, who, along with teachers, may receive support and advice from the Royal Borough’s Autism and Early Years Intervention Team. The Royal Borough does not have any specialist resource base or unit provision attached to its
schools. It wishes to develop this to provide parents with a greater range of local provision from which to choose. As its network of resource bases or autism centres becomes established, the Royal Borough hopes to enable more pupils with an ASC to be educated closer to their homes.

What proposals are there to meet the needs of secondary aged pupils with an ASC?

The Royal Borough is aware of the need to ensure that pupils with an ASC have an appropriate and viable mainstream school placement to which they can transfer from primary school. It intends to provide twenty places in a purpose built autism centre at the soon to be built Kensington Aldridge Academy, which will open in September 2014. It also hopes to enable other secondary schools in the Borough to become ‘autism-friendly’ through a programme of professional development for staff, supported by Queensmill School, which can provide outreach support to schools.

What is a specialist resource base?

A specialist resource base provides a separate class base, staffed by specialist teachers, teaching assistants and speech and language therapists with particular knowledge and expertise in ASC. It offers small group teaching and learning for pupils with an ASC, but also provides specialist advice and support to mainstream class teachers, enabling pupils placed in the resource base to undertake whole school, class and group activities. Being part of a mainstream school can have a powerful socialising effect on pupils with an ASC, who tend to make significant progress over time in such settings. As their skills develop and improve, pupils are educated in mainstream classes wherever possible.

Why locate the new resource base at Barlby Primary School?

The Royal Borough’s strategy of developing SEN provision in its schools has been discussed with Head teachers and they have been invited to express interest in the possibility of their school hosting a specialist resource base for ASC. Barlby Primary School has a record of enabling pupils with an ASC and other SEN to achieve well. It has been judged to be outstanding by Ofsted. Informal discussions have been held with the Head teacher, teachers and governors about the
possibility of placing the new provision at the school and they have responded positively to this idea.

**Accommodation**

The Royal Borough proposes to adapt and refurbish the Making Place building, which sits within the school’s grounds. This will provide a self-contained suite of teaching and meeting rooms. Its facilities are fully accessible and the site is secure.

**Resourcing and staffing arrangements**

The specialist resource base would be an integral part of the school, managed by the Head teacher and governors. The school would receive additional revenue funding in its annual delegated budget, based on the number and needs of the pupils. In determining its revenue support for the base, the Royal Borough would also take account of increased administration costs. It is expected that a teacher-in-charge would be appointed by the Head teacher and governors, in close collaboration with the Royal Borough.

The size of the accommodation would mean that a maximum of twelve pupils could be taught in the resource base. In addition to the teacher-in-charge, it is expected that another teacher and at least two teaching assistants would be appointed. In addition there would be an allocation of speech and language therapist’s time. Discussions around this and any other therapy input will be held with NHS health commissioners and providers as part of this consultation.

The Head teacher, governors and the Royal Borough would wish to recruit staff who already had training and experience in the education of pupils with an ASC. However, all staff attached to the base would undertake further in-depth training and all staff in the school would also be offered training, initially and over time, through a process of continuous professional development.

**How would the resource base operate?**

The aim of a resource base in a mainstream school is to promote the successful inclusion of pupils attending the base in all aspects of school life. This can enable them to access the range of teaching and learning opportunities the school can offer, supporting their educational and social progress.
The Royal Borough believes that a resource base which offered a flexible mix of separate teaching in a specialist environment together with opportunities to learn alongside mainstream peers would provide the appropriate balance for pupils to achieve success.

There are examples of such resource bases operating in mainstream schools across the country and Ofsted have reported on the effectiveness of this type of provision.

**How would Barlby Primary School and its staff and pupils benefit from this proposal?**

Barlby Primary School would benefit in the following ways:

- by having additional specialist SEN expertise within the school which could be a resource for all staff and a benefit for other pupils in the school;
- by having a specialist resource that would help to develop the knowledge, skills and staff of all staff in the school to help raise the achievement of pupils with an ASC;
- by increasing the status and raising the profile of the school;
- by giving pupils the opportunity of learning alongside pupils with a range of ASC, so contributing to their personal and social development and increasing their understanding and tolerance of difference and disability.

**Which children would be admitted to the resource base, and how?**

Admission criteria would be agreed with the Head teacher and governors and would be used to determine which pupils should be admitted. The criteria would state that in order to be considered for admission, pupils would need to have:

- a statement of SEN;
- a diagnosed ASC;
- the potential to gain educationally and socially from the resource base;
- the potential to benefit from the mainstream school opportunities available at Barlby Primary School;
- the potential to access the curriculum of a mainstream school.

All decisions about proposed placements would be made by RBKC’s SEN Panel, in consultation with the pupils’ parents and
the Head teacher. Pupils with the most severe and complex needs would not be placed but would continue to attend a special school.

The phasing of admissions would be discussed with the Head teacher and governors, but it is expected that pupils would be admitted on a phased basis. Places in the base would be additional to the school’s pupil admission number and would not affect the number admitted to the main school.

Barlby Primary School already has pupils on roll who have ASC. The expertise of staff in the resource base would be available for these pupils. If, at the time that the resource base opens, there are pupils on roll with statements who might benefit from placement in the base, this would be raised at the annual review and fully discussed with parents, before a proposal is made to RBKC. The SEN Panel would make a decision using the agreed criteria and the assessment evidence. However, there is no expectation that pupils with ASC already at Barlby Primary School would necessarily transfer to the base, which would be a Borough resource.

**What is involved in the consultation process?**

This consultation paper will be circulated to:
- parents, staff and governors of Barlby Primary School;
- RBKC parents of children with an ASC where they may have an interest in the proposal;
- Heads and chairs of governors of RBKC schools;
- neighbouring local authorities
- the local NHS health commissioners and providers
- voluntary organisations with an interest in the education of children and young people with ASC.

At the end of this paper is a response sheet, to be completed and returned by **18th December 2012**.

The timetable to consider changes to a school is lengthy and intended to ensure that everybody’s views are taken into account. Once the consultation is completed, all views will be considered by the governors of Barlby Primary School who, in consultation with RBKC, will decide whether they wish to proceed with the proposals. If they decide to proceed, a statutory notice would be published. This would signal the start of a six week period in which people would be given another opportunity to comment on the proposal or object to it.
### Key stages in the consultation process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consultation period, in which this consultation paper is circulated, responses are invited, meetings are held and responses considered.</td>
<td>13th November – 18th December</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Publication of statutory notice. Six week period for comments and objections.</td>
<td>3rd January – 14th February</td>
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<td>RBKC cabinet members for children’s services and education consider outcome of statutory consultation.</td>
<td>14th February – 26th February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If agreement given to proceed, resource base opens.</td>
<td>September 2013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you agree with the Royal Borough’s proposal to open a resource base for up to 12 pupils with an ASC at Barlby Primary School, from September 2013?

I agree ☐  I disagree ☐  I am not sure ☐

Please give your views:

Please turn over
Are you:
(Please tick all that apply)

A parent of a pupil at Barlby Primary School? ☐
A member of staff at the school? ☐
A governor of the school? ☐
A parent of a child with an ASC? ☐
Someone with another interest in the proposals? (Please give details below) ☐

About you

Please provide your name and address, these may be used to contact you in relation to this consultation. You need not provide this information if you would prefer not to.

Name

Address

Thank you for completing this response sheet.

Please send to: The Consultation Team, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, FREEPOST LON 16042, London W8 7BR
You do not need a stamp. Alternatively you can email consult@rbkc.gov.uk

Completed response sheets and any other written responses must be received by the Royal Borough by 18th December 2012.

The personal information you provide will be handled by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. The information will be used by the Council in connection with this consultation. Your information will not be shared with any other organisations.