

Proposed relocation of the specialist Primary Deaf Provision

Nottingham City's Focused Primary Provision for deaf children is currently located at Firbeck Primary Academy and its dedicated space for teaching and learning caters for the needs of the current 14 deaf children on roll (numbers vary between 10 and 14 on roll). Nottingham City Council, in conjunction with Firbeck Academy, is proposing to relocate the specialist provision to an alternative primary school in the city. **The proposed relocation date is September 2021.**

Why is this being proposed?

Whilst recognising the significant changes within leadership and the improving educational provision, Firbeck Academy still needs to continue to focus and drive their school improvement journey. Staff for the deaf provision have been difficult to recruit (there has been a national shortage) and to retain. To ensure the long term sustainability of the Deaf Provision, there will be a requirement for school based teaching staff to undertake the 'teacher of the deaf' qualification which will create significant difficulties for Firbeck Academy in terms of capacity and release time. Therefore the LA have undertaken scoping work with other schools who are in the Ofsted Good or Outstanding category and have the teaching capacity to enable staff to undertake these qualifications and secure the required skills required to give Nottingham City deaf learners the best possible educational experience.

Currently, the Local Authority funds and commissions the places and manages the pupil admissions, with a Service Level Agreement in place for Firbeck Academy to deliver the provision.

The priority is to ensure that the deaf provision is sustainably retained in the City and that it is successfully embedded in a good school, which is wholly passionate and committed to inclusion. The provision itself is very highly regarded by pupils and their families, as well as by the wider deaf community and partner organisations. It is crucial that this is not lost and that opportunities are harnessed to further develop the expertise and commitment of specialist staff. This will in turn promote improvements in the standard, quality and range of provision for the children, building on the many existing strengths.

Mellers Primary School, centrally based in Radford, has been identified as the ideal school to which to relocate the provision. Mellers is currently Ofsted rated 'good' and hugely committed to improving the life chances for all children. Their leadership commitment and that of the whole staff is to work together in promoting and instilling an inclusive culture, ethos and environment for all children. Mellers Primary is very centrally located and therefore is more easily accessed city wide, reducing travel distances and costs. This would benefit children with special educational needs (SEND), and is particularly important for primary aged pupils. Firbeck Academy is located in the far south west reaches of the city and the deaf pupils who attend live across the city, some of whom have a fair distance to travel.

Mellers Primary will continue to foster and further develop close links with Nottingham University Samworth Academy (NUSA) to ensure smooth transition for those children who move through to their secondary deaf provision. Support will continue from the existing specialist staff who ensure the needs of the deaf pupils are fully met within the daily life of the school. The teachers of the deaf will maintain positive relationships with other services such as audiology, speech and language therapy, educational psychologists, cochlear implant centres and the British Sign Language (BSL) tutor to ensure that the children receive the holistic support required to help them progress.

The proposal will involve the design and building of an additional facility on the site of Mellers Primary, to provide a specialist base and provision for 1:1 or small group support, that will enable the pupils to be taught in their year groups in the main school for much of each day and so that support can be effectively integrated. The new build dedicated learning space will be specifically designed to ensure that deaf children have the facilities and support required to meet their needs and help them to progress.

This proposal will be consulted on for a period of 4 weeks with all stakeholders. The LA will work in collaboration with NOVA Academy Trust (who run Firbeck Primary) to manage the consultation process, to ensure that all stakeholders are encouraged to share their views and that the required statutory process is adhered to before any final decisions are made.

How to respond to the consultation

The consultation period will run from **Monday 11th January to Sunday 7th February**. We welcome and encourage all those affected to share their views.

Please email your comments, feedback and questions on the proposal to Janine Walker, Head of SEND and Vulnerable Pupils at Nottingham City Council: janine.walker@nottinghamcity.gov.uk, by the closing date. Thank you.