

Consultation on variation to admissions arrangements

Proposal: Establish a new Cognition and Learning Additionally Resourced Provision at The Bridge Academy

Introduction

1. This document sets out details of a proposal relating to the establishment of a Cognition and Learning Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) at The Bridge Academy, for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

Background

2. The Bridge Academy is a six-form entry secondary academy, which accommodates children from Year 7 to Year 13. The school has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 180, and has a sixth form of up to 250 students. The overall admission number is therefore 1150.

Proposal

3. The Bridge Academy is proposing to establish a Cognition and Learning ARP for 15 pupils with an EHCP, across year groups 7-11 (i.e. 3 pupils per year group). The ARP places will be as part of the PAN. However, as the ARP will effectively replace part of the current nurture provision, this will not have any impact on mainstream admissions.

4. In order to ensure that they are fully supported, ARP pupils will have a dedicated section of the academy and the majority of their lessons will be in small classes, separate from the mainstream for KS3. This dedicated area of the academy will comprise two classrooms, a sensory space, small computer area and an outdoor terrace. Where appropriate ARP students will be placed in mainstream lessons, so that they feel integrated into the academy as a whole, and are prepared for when they leave the ARP. A staggered transition in Year 9 will support ARP students in joining the Foundation Pathway of courses for KS4. The current Bridge KS3 nurture group runs in a very similar fashion, meaning the academy staff are well aware of the potential challenges and what support will be needed to address these.

5. If approved, the plan is to formally open the new facility in September 2024. The three ARP students joining in the first year would join the Year 7 nurture provision. This class would move to being mainly for students with EHCPs and a primary need of MLD. Staff teaching and working with students in this provision would receive specific training on supporting students with MLD and MLD specific interventions would be put in place. Thereafter, the provision will grow incrementally, year-on-year, with three students joining the provision in Year 7 each year, until the total capacity of 15.

Rationale

6. This proposal has been formed in response to a growing demand for such places in the local area and a desire to improve the quality of SEND provision in Hackney. Since the introduction of the Children and Families Act 2014, the number of Hackney resident pupils with an EHCP has risen by approximately 350 pupils per year. 4.9% of school aged pupils have an EHC Plan which is above the national average of 4%. 14.9% of pupils in Hackney are identified as having a moderate learning difficulty, which is in the top quartile of identified needs locally.

7. Furthermore, it is anticipated that the SEND pupil population will continue to grow, with an addition 350 pupils gaining an EHC Plan per year.. Naturally, such pupil growth has resulted in the

need for additional provision to accommodate the shifting profile of need, which has only partially been achievable within the bounds of the extant infrastructure. Such large numbers across such a wide range of needs makes supporting these students properly in mainstream settings extremely challenging, and there is a concern that the continued rise in numbers will lead to a drop in the quality of provision, as well as the capacity issues discussed above.

8. As a consequence of this rising demand, the London Borough of Hackney undertook a High Needs review, which recommended the creation of Additionally Resourced Provisions attached to mainstream schools. Following a competitive process, The Bridge Academy was offered the opportunity to apply for an ARP. If approved, this proposal would provide additional MLD places in the borough, and would allow TBA to specialise in providing for this specific need, enabling the academy to significantly improve the quality of its already well regarded SEND provision. The current proposal, therefore, forms part of a borough-wide programme, aimed at providing sufficient SEND school places to meet the current and projected future levels of demand and improving the quality of SEND provision, to be delivered across both specialist and mainstream settings.

Pupil Placement

9. Admission to The Bridge Academy ARP will be decided by the Councils SEND Panel in consultation with the school. The majority of children offered places will have, or be about to receive, an EHCP. On occasion a child may be placed for the purposes of an assessment by agreement between the Council and School. Appropriate pupils will be identified and placed at The Bridge Academy ARP through the EHCP formation process and subsequent review pathways and will have The Bridge Academy ARP named on their EHCP.

The Bridge Academy ARP is designed to be appropriate for students

- whose moderate learning difficulties would affect their ability to access a mainstream secondary curriculum without significant adaptations and support
- who may also present with Communication & Interaction needs or Physical & Sensory needs
- who are able to access the National Curriculum, albeit two to three years below typical age-related expectations

Staffing and HR

10. The Bridge Academy ARP will be managed by a dedicated team of staff comprising The SENDCo and Deputy SENDCo alongside teachers well-trained in SEND and a team of Learning Support Assistants. Multi-agency professionals will continue to work at and support The Bridge and will feed into training and support for staff and students, such as Speech and Language Therapists and Specialist Teachers. These staff will be in addition to the core staff of the school and, as such, the ARP will not place any strain on the existing HR infrastructure within the school.

Capital planning and buildings

11. The creation of the accommodation for the proposed ARP requires investment in converting two existing rooms within the school. These rooms will be replaced by two rooms which are currently used for the academy's nurture provision. Consequently, there will be no material impact on provision for mainstream pupils.

The project cost will be funded through Hackney Education's Special Provision Capital Fund, which is a capital grant allocation provided by the DfE specifically to finance the expansion of SEND provision.