



## Stakeholder Consultation: SEND Unit at Wollaston School

We are pleased to announce that we have been working with North Northamptonshire Council to propose a specialist SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Unit at Wollaston School.

Our plans are now at the stage where we wish to invite your views and questions regarding this proposed provision and our consultation will run from the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023 until the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2023.

The proposed SEND unit will cater for a maximum of 12 students, across the Secondary age range and will be specifically for children with additional communication and interaction needs. This designation includes provision for students who have (either diagnosed or undiagnosed) conditions on the autism spectrum.

As you may be aware, there is a profound shortage of specialist places for students with SEND, both locally and nationally, and at the Nene Valley Partnership, we have worked proactively with the Local Authority to try and formulate a solution to this issue, rather than be a victim of it. We are particularly aware of the need for local provision for children in our communities with communication and interaction needs. Our proposed SEND Unit is designed to support students who would benefit from the facilities and provision of a mainstream secondary school, alongside providing specialist accommodation and educational and pastoral support. The proposed Unit is not designed to replicate special school provision, but rather to ensure a local solution for students who would benefit from such a unit as part of a mainstream school.

In proposing this model, we are grateful to North Northamptonshire Council for their support in ensuring that we can develop these plans in a sustainable manner and without detriment to Wollaston School or our other schools within the Nene Valley Partnership. The Local Authority have committed funding for a Capital project to ensure suitable accommodation for the unit. This will involve development and extension of the old site supervisors house, situated at the front corner of Irchester Road, closest to Hookhams Path. Funding will include full re-development of this accommodation to include specialist teaching spaces, a small kitchen, staff and student toilets and social areas and offices. This area of the site will also include external landscaping and provision of a sensory pod for students in the unit who would benefit from this provision. A small amount of additional car parking capacity will also be realised through the Local Authority funding, with an area being developed near the Sixth Form entrance to the school.

The SEND unit will be led through the existing leadership of Wollaston School, although specialist staff will be recruited to run, manage, teach and support in the unit. Funding for staffing will also come from the North Northamptonshire Council, through both core per pupil





# Nene Valley Partnership

Excellence in Education

funding, as well as through additional high needs funding or EHCP (Educational or Healthcare Plan) funding in order to support individual student needs.

It has been a core part of our planning to ensure that we can deliver high quality SEND provision in this unit without detriment to any other students, and both the building programme and running costs will incur no significant additional expense to the core funding of Wollaston School. We are also pleased to announce that the 12 places in the Unit will be additional to Wollaston School's current capacity. As an oversubscribed school, we are well aware of how valued each and every school place is, so again, we are happy to assure all stakeholders that the SEND unit will only enhance our provision.

The plan is for the capital build project to be completed during the late Spring / early Summer and for the Unit to open in September 2023, admitting students on a phased basis to include 8 students during the first academic year of operation. From September 2024, we will operate at the full capacity of 12 students. For students and parents interested in attending the SEND unit, admissions will be organised through the Local Authority and the Special Educational Needs team in the usual way.

In terms of next steps, we are submitting the relevant planning applications and will liaise with our near neighbours regarding the nature of the building work. The Nene Valley Partnership also needs to gain formal approval from the DfE (Department for Education) to operate the SEND unit, and in submitting our final application, we will of course incorporate the views of this consultation.

If you would like to submit any thoughts, comments, questions or concerns regarding the proposal, we would be grateful for your responses. Please email [consultation@nenevalleypartnership.com](mailto:consultation@nenevalleypartnership.com) between the 24<sup>th</sup> February and the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2023. Following the closure of the consultation, we will respond formally and publicly to any issues raised and communicate our next steps.

Thank you as always for your support. We believe that this proposal will meet a pressing need for some children and families in our locality. As ever, Wollaston School and the Nene Valley Partnership aims to provide the very best education possible for every student and child whom we serve, and even during times of challenge we will look for ways to improve and enhance our existing provision.

Kind regards

James Birkett

CEO of the Nene Valley Partnership



**Registered Office:** Wollaston School, Irchester Road, Wollaston, Northants, NN29 7PH

**Tel:** 01933 663501

**Email:** [office@wollaston-school.net](mailto:office@wollaston-school.net)

