

January 2021

Consultation on Proposal to Increase the Capacity of Meole Brace School

Introduction

Central Shropshire Academy Trust and Shropshire Council are inviting views on the proposal to increase the capacity of Meole Brace School.

The school currently has a capacity of 1215 places for students in the 11-16 age range and is a mixed comprehensive school. In the last two years the school has been oversubscribed and has, at the request of the Local Authority, admitted an additional 27 students in Year 7, above the Published Admission Number (PAN) of 243, in order to meet excess demand for places in the area.

It is proposed to increase the capacity to 1350, by constructing a new five-classroom teaching block.

Background to this proposal

Demographic growth and the ongoing substantial housing development in the south and west of Shrewsbury have led to an increased demand for secondary school places in the area. Under section 14 of the Education Act 1996, each Local Authority is required to provide sufficient school places for primary and secondary education in its area.

Using Shropshire Council's long-established pupil forecasting methodology and following consultation with senior leaders in the Shrewsbury secondary schools, it was agreed that Meole Brace School offered the most appropriate location and physical capabilities to meet the demand for additional secondary school places in this part of Shrewsbury. The Council has therefore resolved to add the necessary expansion of pupil places at Meole Brace School, adding a class base per year group.

The Meole Brace site is relatively spacious, and the development should have a negligible consequential effect on the remaining school provision which is already well served by local pedestrian, cycle and transport routes.

Planning permission has been granted for construction of the new teaching block and work is commencing during January 2021, with the intention that the building be ready by the start of the 2021-22 academic year. Shropshire Council has secured the necessary funding for the project.

This consultation

The consultation will run from 25th January 2021 for four weeks, up to and including 21st February 2021.

The purpose of the consultation is to allow consultees to express views on the proposal.

This can be done by two means:

- By emailing your comments or questions to enquiries@csacademytrust.org (Please include the word Consultation in the email subject line.)

- By requesting a telephone conversation to raise any questions or concerns – please email your contact details to enquiries@csacademytrust.org (again, with the word consultation in the email subject line) and we will arrange to call you.

Equality Impact Assessment

Please see the appendix below

After the consultation

Once the consultation is closed, all responses will be carefully considered before the Trust makes a final decision to proceed with the proposed change. If we do proceed, there is a formal process for proposing the change to the Department for Education, and as part of the process, this consultation and responses will be included in the application made to assist the Department for Education with the decision making.

APPENDIX

Shropshire Council and CSAT - Equality and Social Inclusion Impact Assessment (ESIIA)

Name of proposed service change
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Increase of capacity of Meole Brace School, from 1215 to 1350

Name of lead officer carrying out the assessment

Pete Johnstone – Executive Principal, Central Shropshire Academy Trust
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Actions to mitigate negative impact or enhance positive impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations
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<p>No specific actions are required to mitigate any negative impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations. Meole Brace School is an established mainstream secondary school with a strong tradition of inclusivity and established policies and procedures for ensuring inclusivity and equality of opportunity. By increasing capacity at Meole Brace school, the identified shortfall in places in the south and west of the town will be addressed. This will reduce numbers of students having to travel longer distances to access secondary school provision. Meole Brace has already admitted an extra 27 students into Year 7 in 2019-20 and 2020-21, at the request of the local authority, to avoid these students having to make a long and complicated journey to secondary schools in other areas of Shrewsbury. This would be difficult for all students, but especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds and students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. By increasing the capacity at Meole Brace the school will ultimately be able to provide the extra places across all five-year groups on a permanent basis. A consultation on the proposal will run from 25th January 2021 to 21st February 2021.</p>

Actions to review and monitor the impact of the service change in terms of equality and social inclusion considerations
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<p>The Local Authority will continue to monitor place provision in the Shrewsbury area, and will continue to be responsible for the provision of sufficient spaces in schools in Shrewsbury. CSAT and Meole Brace School will continue to monitor and keep under review all policies in relation to equality of opportunity and inclusion.</p>
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Specific consultation and engagement with intended audiences and target groups for the service change

The proposal for additional school places in the south and west of Shrewsbury has resulted from consultations over recent years, dating back to the summer of 2016, when the strategic analysis of forecast pupil growth across the whole of Shropshire was produced. In this period a series of meetings have been held with senior school leaders from the neighbouring schools. This has included both primary and secondary schools.

A series of reports have been taken to both Cabinet and Council regarding the proposals for a new teaching block at Meole Brace which has resulted in the approval of funding for the capital build being secured in December 2019 and July 2020 (for the Community Infrastructure Levy element).

The new block has been granted planning approval which will involve further consultation, in particular with residents in the local community in which the school will be located.