

Statutory Notice on a proposal to change the designation of the specialist inclusion base at Stepgates Community School

Stepgates Community School
Est 1908
SCS

SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

School Organisation Statutory Notice

Notice is given in accordance with section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, as amended by the Education Act 2011, that Surrey County Council is proposing to change the designation of the specialist inclusion base at Stepgates Community School.

The specialist inclusion base currently has a designation of Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) and Surrey County Council, in partnership with the school's Headteacher and the Governing Body of Stepgates Community School, is proposing to change this to autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Local authority details

Local Authority	Surrey County Council
Address	Woodhatch Place 11 Cockshot Hill Reigate Surrey RH2 8EF

School details

Name of School	Stepgates Community School
Category of School	Primary
Type of School	Community
URN	125122
Address	Stepgates, Chertsey, Surrey
Postcode	KT16 8HT

Introduction

This paper outlines a proposal to change the designation of the specialist inclusion base at Stepgates Community School. Stepgates Community School is a one-form entry (1FE) primary school in the borough of Runnymede in Surrey. It currently has a 29-place specialist inclusion base with a designation of Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). The school was rated 'Good' by Ofsted in June 2023.

If the proposal was agreed, it would mean that the designation of the specialist inclusion base would be changed from Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) to autism spectrum disorder (ASD) from February 2027.

The statutory process and timescales for the proposal are detailed below.

Proposed timeline

It is proposed that the change in designation will take place in February 2027.

Phase	Date
Statutory notices	23/11/2026 – 18/12/2026
Cabinet Member Decision	January 2027
Implementation	February 2027

Making Representations, Objections and Comments

1. This is a four-week representation period which starts on Monday 23rd November 2026 and concludes on Friday 18 December 2026.
2. Any person can make comments, agree, or object to the proposal by sending representations to the Local Authority through the following channels:

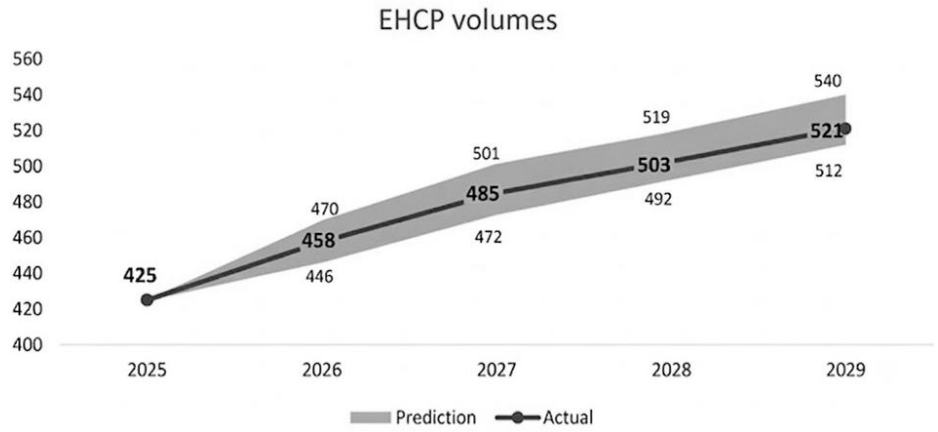
Website	Surrey Says
Email	schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk
Post	Stepgates Community School Proposal Education Place Planning Surrey County Council Woodhatch Place 11 Cockshot Hill Reigate Surrey RH2 8EF

Background

West Surrey context

Mid-range forecasts project that the number of pupils with an EHCP who need a place at a specialist base in a mainstream school in West Surrey is expected to rise by 23%, from 425 pupils in 2025 to 521 pupils in 2029. Of these, 45% of the pupils have Autism (ASD) recorded as the primary need in their EHCP.

Graph 1 – forecasted number of EHCPs in West Surrey from 2025 to 2029



Alongside this, it is predicted there will be a 16% increase in the number of pupils attending maintained specialist schools and a 33% increase in the reliance on non-maintained and independent schools. Creating additional specialist school places and specialist inclusion bases in mainstream schools will seek to reduce the reliance on non-maintained and independent schools.

The specialist inclusion base at Stepgates Community School expanded from 21 places to 29 places in September 2023, including the delivery of a new bespoke accommodation for the base.

This proposal is seeking to redesignate the provision already available at Stepgates Community School so that it would better reflects the needs of its current and emerging cohorts.

The main change involved in this proposal would be in relation to the way that pupil places are funded in the specialist inclusion base, rather than proposing any material changes to the number of places in or the practical setup of the provision currently offered.

Funding would reflect Stepgates Community School's transitional position from specialist SLCN provision to specialist ASD provision. Existing pupils currently on roll within the SLCN inclusion base, and pupils placed before the approved change of designation would take effect, shall ordinarily be funded as SLCN inclusion base placements. Pupils newly placed after approval of the significant change to ASD designation shall be funded as ASD inclusion base placements under Surrey County Council's Mainstream Specialist Centre Funding Framework.

The change to funding is proposed from 3 February 2027 and new admissions for September 2027.

How might this proposal impact Stepgates Community School?

1. The proposed change the designation of the specialist inclusion base at Stepgates Community School from Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) to autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is not anticipated to have any detrimental impact on the educational provision, resources, or accommodation available to current mainstream pupils.

2. Current pupils attending the specialist inclusion base will be unaffected by this change in designation. All pupils attending or applying to the provision will continue to require an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) specifying the specialist inclusion base as the appropriate placement to meet their individual needs and will be placed by the local authority, following the statutory process.

3. There are no changes proposed for staff at Stepgates Community School.

4. As a new bespoke building was created in 2023 when the existing specialist inclusion base was expanded, there are no changes proposed to the accommodation as the current building is suitable for pupils with autism.

5. There will be no change to the mainstream published admission number (PAN) of 30 from September 2027.

Equality Impact Assessment

6. An Equality Impact Assessment is being completed throughout the consultation process and will be published as part of the Cabinet Member decision process.

Consultation

7. The first stage of consultation was open from 24th September 2026 to 6th November 2026. During this period, Surrey County Council shared its proposal with the school communities, other local schools including headteachers and chairs of governors, the local community, unions, partner agencies and with the staff of the school.

8. The associated documentation was published on Surrey County Council's 'Surrey Says' website and circulated to local stakeholders. Interested parties were invited to return responses to the consultation via an online form or alternatively by email or post.

Key points from the consultation responses:

- A total of **2** responses were received during the consultation period
- Respondents were asked, "Do you agree with the proposal to change the designation of the inclusion base from Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) to autism spectrum disorder (ASD) at Stepgates School" and were given the option to select Agree, Disagree or Don't Know.
- 100% respondents agreed with the proposal.
- The full consultation analysis is published on the council's Surrey Says website.

What happens next?

9. The representation period, in which statutory notices are published, is now open for a four-week period from Monday 23 November 2026 to Friday 18 December 2026. The publication of notices is when the local authority formally states its proposals. This will be the final opportunity for consultees to make their views known before a decision is taken on the proposal.

10. You can make representations, objections and comments using the online form on Surrey Says. Alternatively, you can respond by email or post at the addresses given in the section 'Making Representations, Objections and Comments'.

11. The final decision on the proposal will be made by the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning in January 2027.