

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO MERGE RIDGEWAY AND ROUND OAK SCHOOLS THROUGH THE EXPANSION OF RIDGEWAY SCHOOL AND ROUND OAK SCHOOL CLOSING

Introduction

This consultation is being undertaken to advise you of proposals concerning Round Oak and Ridgeway Schools and to invite you to tell us what you think of the proposals. This is part of a statutory consultation process that Warwickshire County Council (WCC) is managing in partnership with the Governing Bodies of both schools. The proposal is:

1. To extend the age range of Ridgeway School from 3 to 11 years old to 3 to 19 years old.
2. To increase the capacity of Ridgeway School.
3. To close Round Oak School, with staff and all pupils transferring to Ridgeway School (initially remaining at the former Round Oak School site).

Round Oak School, a community special school - Brittain Lane, Warwick CV34 6DX
Ridgeway School, a community special school – Deansway, Warwick CV34 5DF

If the proposal is approved, the name of the expanded school will be considered and consulted on as appropriate.

Why Change?

There is an increased demand for special school places in the area. WCC forecasts that an additional 78 places will be needed in the Leamington/Warwick area by academic year 2022/2023. It is expected that most of the increased demand will be met by an expansion of existing special schools.

Ridgeway School is a special school for primary aged pupils. The site of the school is small and there is no scope for further building. Round Oak School is a special school for secondary aged pupils. It has a much larger site which offers the opportunity for development. All the additional demand could therefore be met through an expansion of Round Oak School. However, this would allocate new classrooms to secondary aged pupils only, when there is also a demand for primary places. By merging the two schools, the additional demand can be spread across primary and secondary phases.

Amalgamation of the two schools also has other benefits. A single all-through will lead to economies of scale, enabling school leaders to make more efficient use of resources to ensure that children progress well. The move from primary to secondary will be more straightforward as children will be moving within the same school. All other areas of the county have all-through special schools.

The amalgamation is likely to lead to improvements in the standard and capacity of special educational needs provision, through shared resources and expertise as well as the flexibility to expand capacity across all year groups.

Closure of Round Oak School

As part of the merger, it is proposed to close Round Oak School on 31 August 2020, with Ridgeway School expanding its age range from 1 September 2020 to accommodate all pupils that would otherwise have attended Round Oak School. Ridgeway School will expand onto the former Round Oak School premises.

Round Oak School currently has 127 pupils (male and female), with Special Educational Needs described as Moderate Learning Difficulty and Severe Learning Difficulty.

Ridgeway School also provides education for pupils with Special Educational Needs described as Moderate Learning Difficulty and Severe Learning Difficulty.

All pupils who would have continued at or joined Round Oak School in September 2020 will automatically be enrolled at the expanded Ridgeway School.

The closure of Round Oak School is necessary to enable the formation of an all-through special school with the potential for increased capacity.

It is anticipated that the impact on the community of the amalgamation of the two schools will be negligible as the amalgamated schools will continue to operate across both sites. Any subsequent significant increase in pupil numbers will involve further consultation.

It is not considered that the proposals will have any detrimental effect for 16 to 19 year olds in respect of their educational or training achievements, their participation in education or training, or the range of educational or training opportunities available to them.

Building consequences

This proposal concerns the statutory process of extending the capacity and upper age limit for pupils at Ridgeway School to 19 years and closing Round Oak School.

The current proposal does not require pupils to change sites, or travel between sites.

Once the schools are amalgamated there will be a separate process for the expansion of the merged school to create extra places which will be linked to the submission of an application for planning permission.

What is the proposed timetable?

17th January 2020: Portfolio Holder for Education and Learning gave approval for the proposal to go out for consultation. This report is available to the general public by following the link below to the County Council website:
<https://democratic.warwickshire.gov.uk/cm5/Calendarofmeetings.aspx>

9th March 2020 – 3rd April 2020: Consultation with parents and the local community to take into account the views expressed regarding the proposals.

14th May 2020: If the County Council's Cabinet agree to the proposals, the decision will be implemented with the merger being completed in time for **1 September 2020**.

Have Your Say...

As an integral part of this process, we are inviting you to take part in this consultation. We welcome your views on the proposed changes raised in this letter and all viewpoints will be taken into account as part of the decision making process.

Feedback can be given in the following ways;

In writing to:
Education Services
Building 3, Saltisford Office Park
Ansell Way
Warwick
CV34 4UL

Via E-mail:
schoolorganisation@warwickshire.gov.uk

or, by completing the online survey at <https://ask.warwickshire.gov.uk/schools/copy-of-amalgamation-ridgeway-roundoak>

The deadline for comments is **3rd April 2020**

Following the end of the consultation we shall publish the results and this may include quotes of comments which will be anonymous. If you reply to an anonymous survey then no personal details will be captured. If you would like further information, visit our website: www.warwickshire.gov.uk/privacy or contact our Customer Service Centre on 01926 410410