

Bolton Council

School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013

The following provides relevant information, comprising the Complete Proposal, in respect of the proposed enlargement of Green Fold Special School.

The proposal to increase the physical capacity at Green Fold special school falls within the requirements of a 'significant alteration' as defined within the School Organisation Regulations (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) 2013 and therefore is required to undergo this formal consultation process.

1. School and Local Authority Details

Name of school: Green Fold special school, Highfield Road, Farnworth, Bolton, Greater Manchester, BL4 0NS

Name of Local Authority: Bolton Council, Children Services, Town Hall, Victoria Square, Bolton, Greater Manchester, BL1 1RU.

Contact Details: Graham Marshall, Senior Asset Management Officer, Bolton Council, Children Services, 1st Floor Town Hall, Bolton, Greater Manchester, BL1 1RU, or via email at graham.marshall@bolton.gov.uk

2. Description of the proposed alteration

It is proposed to enlarge and increase the current capacity of Green Fold Special School in order to permanently expand the pupil places at the school from 130 to 185 places with effect from the 1st September 2025.

3. Evidence of Demand

Green Fold is a popular and outstanding local authority community special school that provides education and support for children aged 4-11 year old, who have a range of special needs including those with severe learning difficulties (SLD), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

The school operates across two main sites, at the Upper and Lower Orchards, both of which are located off Highfield Road, Farnworth, Bolton as part of the Orchards Federation which includes Cherry Tree Community Primary School and The Orchards Nursery. In addition, due to the high demand for places at the school, it presently operates out of two satellite locations at the former Little Lever Children's

Centre building located on Herbert Street, Little Lever and from the former Alexandra Nursery building located on Martha Street, Daubhill, Bolton.

To meet previous demand the school was subject to an increase in pupil numbers from 1st September 2016, when pupil capacity was increased by extending the school building to enable the school to admit from 90 up to 130 pupils overall on roll.

However, pupil projections have forecast the need for further increases within Special School provision and to meet this ongoing demand, Green Fold has already admitted pupils above its planned pupil number. As a result of this, the school has now filled all its available accommodation and will be unable to increase pupil numbers further without an increase to its physical capacity.

It is therefore proposed to enlarge and increase the current capacity of Green Fold School from 130 to 185 places for pupils in Reception through to Y6, to meet this future identified demand, and thereby provide 55 additional places.

4. Objectives

The objective of this proposal is to permanently expand Green Fold special school, to enable the school to accommodate additional pupils and in doing so, to raise the current overall capacity of the school from 130 pupil places to up to 185 pupil places overall across all year groups Reception through to Year 6.

The proposed expansion of Green Fold special School will help to meet the identified rise in demand for places and provide increased opportunities for children with special educational needs within Bolton to access the Outstanding education that Green Fold offers and facilities that best meet their individual needs.

5. How the proposal will be implemented

If approved, it is proposed that the school will permanently increase its pupil capacity from 1st September 2025 and although the school has already accommodated some additional pupils because of the high demand for places, the proposal subject of this consultation is to make this change permanent to enable further pupil intakes.

It is proposed that the enlargement of the school will be achieved by internal remodelling and extending the two buildings at the current Upper and Lower Orchards sites. The proposal also includes the construction of an Early Years unit at the Upper Orchards site to accommodate Cherry Tree reception classes and the Orchards Nursery which will be relocated from the Lower Orchards site to facilitate its remodelling and extension for Green Fold Pupils. In addition, the proposal will include the reformation of existing external space including the provision of a new MUGA on each site for recreation and physical education.

It is intended that the works will be delivered in parallel on both sites and through consecutive phases to reduce where possible any negative impact on a live school environment. Additional classrooms will be completed in the first phase of works on both sites to enable and facilitate remodelling of other areas to be undertaken. It is expected that all works will be completed by Spring 2026.

The proposal also includes the retention of one of the satellite facilities to continue to provide accommodation for up to 24 pupils as part of the overall solution, which will be agreed with the school further in due course.

6. Project Costs

The proposed overall scheme is estimated to cost in the region of £8.6M and is expected to be supported from capital funding that has been allocated to Bolton Council from the Department of Education, to expand and increase special school provision.

The proposed capital investment of education provision within Bolton will achieve longer term savings by reducing the current demand and high cost of placing children in out of borough settings. Furthermore, providing additional, locally accessible places will greatly reduce pupil journey times to and from school, resulting in much greater convenience which will benefit both pupils and their families.

7. The Effect of the Proposal on other educational institutions in the area

The proposed enlargement of Green Fold special school is part of a wider Bolton Council strategy to increase special school capacity within the borough, to respond to identified rising demand from Bolton families for local school places for their children, to reduce and avoid the need to place children in out of borough settings, to reduce travel times and the nuisance and inconvenience this causes, as well as reducing the ongoing high cost of accessing such places.

This wider strategy includes the enlargement of four of the borough's special schools, and in addition to Green Fold, includes the expansions of Ladywood Academy Primary Special School, Firwood Academy Secondary Special School and Rumworth Community Secondary Special School. The broader strategy to increase opportunities and the provision of support for children with special educational needs also includes the establishment of a number of SEND Resource Provisions within existing mainstream schools and over the course of the past 12 months, 7 separate such schemes have been delivered or are being delivered within other mainstream schools in Bolton.

The entire programme has been welcomed by the DfE, who are supporting its delivery with additional SEND Safety Valve funding.

8. Consultation

Prior to the publication of the current Statutory Notice, an informal consultation exercise was undertaken, which ran from Monday 17th April 2023 to Friday 26th May 2023.

Letters advising of the proposal were sent to all Staff, Governors, Parents and Carers of pupils attending the school, Local Farnworth Ward Councillors, Union Members, Local MP's, Head Teachers at other Bolton schools and colleagues at the Roman Catholic Salford and Manchester Church of England Diocese. The document was also available on the Council's website.

Bolton Council received one response to this consultation from a parent of a child at the school. They raised concern that due to the high pressure of demand for places at the school, it was presently operating across two additional satellite sites which was not an equitable situation for all pupils, and that more investment was required at the main school to ensure fairness for all.

This response was considered by the Executive Member for Children's Services at a meeting held on the 12th September where it was agreed to proceed with the proposal to invest in the permanent expansion of Green Fold special school at its two main sites at the Upper and Lower Orchards, and undertake the formal statutory process required to enlarge the capacity of the school.

9. How to make representation

The consultation will run from Monday 5th February 2024 until Sunday 3rd March 2024.

Within 4 weeks from the date of the publication of the Statutory Proposal on Monday 5th February 2024, any person may object to or make comment on the proposal by writing to the Consultation and Research Team at consultation@bolton.gov.uk with the subject line as 'Statutory Consultation – Green Fold' or alternatively you can write in to:

Freepost RTTT-YTEL-YSXS,
Consultation & Research Team,
2nd Floor, Town Hall,
Victoria Square,
Bolton
BL1 1RU.