

19 May 2025

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**Consulting you on a proposal to open an Autism Provision (12 places) at Witham Oaks Academy.****Consultation period:** until Friday 13th June

This document sets out:

- Information about the school – Witham Oaks Academy
- Why we are proposing to open an Autism Provision
- The proposal - rationale
- How you can give your views
- The timetable

The School – Witham Oaks Academy is located in Spa Road, Witham, CM8 1NA. The school is three form entry and has a Pupil Admission Number of 90 with capacity for 360 pupils. At the heart of Witham Oaks lies a learning community that embraces every opportunity to 'Ignite Young Minds' by offering exciting, social, multi-cultural and memorable educational experiences for each and every one of the learners.

This document sets out a proposal to open a 12 place Autism Provision at Witham Oaks.

Why we are proposing to open a 12 place Autism Provision?

- **Meeting Demand:** There is often a growing need for specialized support for children with Autism Spectrum Conditions (ASC) in Mid Essex. By opening such a provision, the school can better accommodate these pupils.
- **Inclusive Education:** The provision allows children with autism to access mainstream education while receiving the necessary support. This promotes inclusivity and helps integrate pupils into the broader school community.
- **Specialised Support:** The provision typically includes trained staff and tailored resources to meet the specific needs of children with autism. This ensures that pupils receive the best possible educational experience.
- **Local Authority Initiatives:** Essex CC encourages schools to develop specialised provisions to address identified needs within the community. This can be part of a broader strategy to enhance SEN (Special Educational Needs) services.
- **Improving Outcomes:** Specialised provisions can significantly improve educational and social outcomes for children with autism, helping them to thrive both academically and personally.
- **Support for local schools:** The provision will help children in schools locally to access education by providing placement, thus reducing SEN need in local schools. Outreach will also be offered.

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A new autism provision can also benefit children without autism in several ways:

- **Enhanced Understanding and Empathy:** Exposure to diverse learning needs can foster empathy and understanding among all pupils. This can lead to a more inclusive and supportive school environment.
- **Improved Teaching Strategies:** Teachers trained to support children with autism often employ strategies that benefit all pupils, such as clear communication, structured routines, and individualised learning approaches.
- **Reduced Class Sizes:** With some pupils receiving specialized support, mainstream classes may have fewer pupils, allowing for more individualised attention and a better learning experience for everyone.
- **Positive School Culture:** An inclusive environment promotes a positive school culture where differences are celebrated, and all pupils feel valued and respected.
- **Peer Support Opportunities:** Pupils without autism can develop leadership and mentoring skills by supporting their peers with autism, fostering a sense of community and cooperation.

The proposal – Rationale

Inclusion is crucial in areas with high deprivation and a high percentage of disadvantaged pupils because it ensures equal educational opportunities, improves academic outcomes, supports social and emotional development, helps break the cycle of poverty, and fosters community cohesion. As a Primary Trust we recognise the value of quality provision for children in the statutory age range.

The introduction of a resource base in Witham Oaks aims to provide enhanced support for diverse learning needs, promote inclusive education, improve academic outcomes, and ensure compliance with regulations, while effectively utilizing currently underused dedicated provision space to create a more supportive and inclusive environment for all students.

Hosting an autism provision can upskill and benefit current staff by providing specialised training, enhancing teaching techniques, fostering empathy, improving collaborative skills, offering career advancement opportunities, and effectively utilising dedicated provision spaces.

The autism provision can support other schools locally by serving as a resource hub, offering specialized training, sharing best practices, and providing outreach services. This collaboration can enhance the overall quality of autism support across the local education community.

How you can give your views?

Your views are important to us. Please:

- Send your comments to admin@inspiresmat.co.uk
- Post to Inspires MAT, Business Centre, Templars Academy, Cressing Road, Witham, CM8 2NJ

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What happens after the consultation?

All the feedback we receive will be collated and reported to the Co Headteachers/CEO and Governors/Trustees of the school. After three weeks, representations received, along with outcomes of the informal consultation, will be reported to the DfE as part of a Significant Change Request, who will decide whether to go ahead with the Autism Provision at the school. If the proposal is agreed by the DfE, the school will implement the change.

Timetable Event	When
Start of consultation	19 th May 2025
Deadline for feedback and comments	13 th June 2025
Publication of proposal (1day)	19 th May 2025
Representations (3 weeks)	19 th May – 13 th June 2025
End of representation period	5pm, 13 th June 2025
DfE decision on proposal	To be confirmed
Implementation (if agreed)	20 th October 2025

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