

Consultation Paper

Royal Borough of Greenwich Children's Services

**Closure of the designated Visual Impairment provision at
Stationers' Crown Woods Academy**

September 2021



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I. Introduction

I.1 This consultation document sets out a proposal in relation to the designated Visual Impairment (VI) provision Stationers' Crown Woods Academy (SCWA).

I.2 This proposal is in direct response to the following which can be evidenced:

- The rapid decline in numbers of students at the VI provision at SCWA
- Financial viability of the current service model in the context of rapidly declining numbers of students
- Inability of SCWA to retain and attract suitably qualified members of staff to lead the provision.
- Students and families opting to remain in a non specialist mainstream provision with an individual package of support
- The position of neighbouring Local Authorities who are choosing to place students with a VI in different provisions.

I.3 This document forms the basis for formal consultation with SCWA, families and young people attending the provision, neighbouring local authorities and the Greenwich Parent Carer Forum.

I.4 The consultation period will run from Friday 27th May 2022 to Friday 17th June 2022. Consideration may be given to extend this consultation process as appropriate in the event of any major issues emerging.

I.5 This Consultation documentation comprises of:

- Timetable for consultation
- Proposed new models for delivering support in the interim outlined in their EHCP for the remaining 3 students attending the SCWA VI provision
- Long term proposals for young people with a VI.

2. Background & Rationale

2.1 The current SCWA VI provision was set up to have a full time Qualified teacher of the vision impaired (QTVI) and a team of support staff trained to deliver the range of interventions needed to support this group of students to include:

- Braille, including braille tuition, eg specific braille for Maths, specific braille for Sciences
- VI tech support, and linked training for staff and students such as support for braille laptops eg brailenote touch

- Mobility training and support for staff and VI students
- VI Awareness, main school staff training, peer VI Awareness training
- Specific pastoral care and emotional support for VI students
- Exam adaptations and modifications for internal exams, requests for adaptations/modifications in external exams from exam bodies
- Note taking services for VI students
- Creating a VI friendly inclusive environment, including the physical environment eg braille on door signage, clear markings around the site and activities, resources and learning opportunities
- Specialist resource provision eg adapted learning materials, such as embossed world maps, big button calculators, tactile resources for science subjects.
- Facilitated work experience for VI students, links to charities such as Blind In Business to support VI students with career development

2.2 Over time students (possibly due to the development of technology in this area) have chosen to attend alternative provision locally and outside of the borough, typically mainstream schools with a specialist package of support linked to their EHCP including:

- Up to full time LSA support from an LSA trained and supported to work with students with a vision impairment. Including using Braille and technology
- Additional support from an LSA to support the making of individual resources often linked to using Braille
- Support from a QTVI in school for up to 3 times a week to support the above
- Provision of specialist technology and equipment as recommended by the QTVI
- Additional therapeutic support as needed

2.3 The numbers of students choosing SCWA VI provision has dropped over a period of time due to the above and the academy have been unable to retain their recruited QTVI over a long period of time. This has meant that:

- The provision no longer has suitably skilled staff to meet the needs of the students who originally attended the provision
- Greenwich students with a significant VI are choosing to attend mainstream schools with a high level of support in their EHCP as families and children view the support there as being more effective as it is directly supported by a QTVI and Habilitation Officer from the Sensory Service.
- Neighbouring local Authorities no longer view SCWA VI provision as a specialist resource and so consider it for their children and in one case have withdrawn a student to receive support in a local mainstream school.

- This has led to the SCWA VI provision no longer being financially viable.

2.4 The number of visually impaired students has fallen to the position; as of September 2021 there are only 3 students remaining, all in KS4 and with no new placements for the next academic year. (See below)

NUMBER OF STUDENTS	YEAR GROUP	BOROUGH
1	Y11	Bexley
2	Y10	Both from RBG

2.5 Other Local Authority VI teams that have in the past used SCWA VI provision have been clear they will not be placing any students in the future.

3. Proposal – Closure of designated VI provision at SCWA

- 3.1 It is proposed that from the end of the summer term 2022 the designated provision for VI students at SCWA is closed. However the Royal Borough of Greenwich remains committed to ensuring that all students with a VI continue to receive the highest quality of VI support at whatever provision they choose.
- 3.2 Most Greenwich students who need VI support will in the future receive specialist VI support and provision quantified and specified within their EHCP, with the legal protection that this brings. Students would be able to make preferences for a mainstream school and be supported as above with a combination of resources at school level and input from the central Sensory Service which would include input as recommended in the NATSIP guidelines for input from a QTVI.
- 3.3 Greenwich will also consult with specialist provision outside of the borough where this is a preference and is in line with recommendations made by the professionals involved with the child. This is the system at primary level although currently no pupils have chosen this option and all are in mainstream schools.
- 3.4 There will be an investment in the central sensory team VI service to reflect this change.

3.5 There will be a plan in place to facilitate social links between VI pupils across schools, led by the central VI service.

4. **Equality Impact Assessment**

The implementation of the proposals will be undertaken with due regard to Council wide equality impact assessment. The proposed reorganisation has due regard to the need to be inclusive, meet the needs of vulnerable children and young people and ensure that high expectations are promoted for their well-being, achievement and success.

5. **Conclusion**

This proposal represents a closure of the SCWA VI provision in response to the current needs and changing demands.

Tracey Russell

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Proposed Timetable

The provisional timetable is as follows:

Date/s	Activity	Action by
Wk beg 01/09/21	Informal consultation with SCWA and notification to Bexley SEND team who have a student attending the provision	Tracy Russell/Roz Weeks/Di Osbourne
Wk beg 23/05/22	Opening of consultation period	SCWA
17th June 2022	End of formal consultation period (subject to any extension of that period)	All
Wk beg 20/06/22	Consultation responses to be collated and summarised	All
By Wk beg 27/06/22	Delegated report to be completed for decision by Director	Tracy Russell/Roz Weeks/Di Osbourne
Closure of service	End of Summer term 2022	All

