



Larwood Academy Trust

Executive Headteacher: Mr Sean Trimble | B.Ed (hons) MA NPQH |

LARWOOD DRIVE, STEVENAGE, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG1 5BZ
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Larwood School

Deputy Headteacher: Mr Pierre Van Der Merwe | BA, NPQH |

Headteacher: Mr David Pearce | BA (hons), PGCE, NPQH |

Brandles School

Re: Proposed expansion of numbers on roll at Brandles School, part of Larwood Academy Trust for September 2021.

Dear Colleague

On Wednesday 12th May, we have started the consultation process to enable Brandles School to increase its pupil capacity from the current 54, to 70. This would be achieved in stages by rising to 62 from September 2021 and then during the course of the year 2021-22, rising to 70. Therefore by the end of the academic year 2021-22, we would expect 70 pupils on roll and the future agreed number for Brandles to be 70, pending the formal SEMH review being conducted by Hertfordshire. This process is fully supported by the local authority and they are funding an additional building to enable more pupils to be on site, as the current building with those already on roll is full to capacity.

Timings:

- Pre discussion and agreement on strategy started in the Autumn Term 2020
- Visits to site conducted by Herts took place in March and effected by the pandemic/lockdown measures
- LA agreement to proposal and funding agreed in April 21
- Formal consultation begins Wed 12th May and could only do so once the LA had agreed to support/fund such a change
- DFE significant change document produced and shared in May
- Formal consultation closes Wed 30th June- but any reply greatly received in advance of this date. This equates to a six week consultation period excluding half term week.

Context/background:

Colleagues will be aware of the growing need for additional Special School places in Hertfordshire. The vast majority of Special Schools have expanded places to help cope with demand, and yet there is still work to do in connection with this matter. Brandles has not expanded its roll for a number of years. Mainstream colleagues may also be aware of such issues via possible application experiences, links with existing Special Schools, waiting lists that many Special Schools have had to create due to demand and lack of places, alongside the Hertfordshire Special School Place Planning strategy 2020-2023 document.

Colleagues may not be aware of the specific context that has, in recent years led to sustained growth and demand for additional places at Brandles. This has been influenced by the following:

1. **The growth of pupils placed at Larwood School.** Having expanded up 86 places in 2020, and serving Stevenage and the North/East of Hertfordshire, Brandles is the closest school for many of our pupils and this number has grown with expansion.
2. Larwood School has provided informal support for Brandles since 2018 and formally after **Brandles joined Larwood Academy Trust in Feb 2020.** Many parents now see both schools

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aligning with approaches to behaviour, ethos, elements of curriculum delivery, transitional arrangements etc. Therefore, the impact of this has been that for the last three years, Brandles has needed a two-form entry approach to provision rather than the historical one form entry approach. This equates to approx. 14 boys on roll each year, and currently there is just one year group that does not have 14 on roll. The current/future pupil numbers look as follows below:

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
2021-22	14	14	14	6	14
2022-23	14	14	14	14	14
2023-24	14	14	14	14	14
2024-25	14	14	14	14	14
2025-26	14	14	14	14	14

- The development of provision at Brandles over the last couple of years has seen increased rates of attendance, reduced incidence and need for physical intervention and in 2019, the best set of GCSE/BTEC qualifications that the school has ever produced. Ongoing Trust activities and Improvement Partner reports all agree that Brandles has become a 'good' school. Parents have referred to this in commentary about the transition process and selection of secondary school.
- The proposed growth also allows for greater flexibility to meet needs, place pupils with peers and implement more creative curriculum plans and solutions for each cohort over time. Brandles has always had a transient population with over fifty percent of the school's admissions being in year rather than in September. This creates an unsettled environment with many challenges resulting from constantly changing group dynamics. The increased number of students when cohorts move from KS3 to KS4 also provides greater breadth of choice when selecting options, as more groups become viable allowing the school to offer a wider range of subjects to the cohort moving through.

Please note that the suggested expansion also correlates directly with Hertfordshire's approach to greater numbers of places for children with Special educational needs. They state the following:

-'Vision-A pattern of specialist provision is strategically planned on the basis of evidence of what is required now and in the future.'

In relation to Behaviour and Social Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) workstream:

'Vision-A flexible continuum of support is in place in each area to ensure that children and young people with significant needs affecting their behaviour and /or mental health can access their entitlement to educational provision and their outcomes improve.'

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The percentage of pupils with an EHCP has grown from 2.43% of school population in 2016 to 3.40% in 2019 and continues to grow.

'Hertfordshire special schools are now reaching capacity and as demand continues to rise, new capacity must be built into the system.....'

The shortage of places within the SEMH sector has previously been projected as between 3% in 2021 and 14% by 2025. That equates to 13 places in 2021 and 61 places in 2025. It is noted that these numbers were produced a while ago and very likely to be higher than originally forecast.

The SEMH review mentioned in the document with completion and actions by 2021 is not on track and has only just got started.

How will the changes suggested help?

- Immediately in September 2021, there will be a group of pupils (approx. 7) that will have a place at Brandles rather than have to try and find other placements (none available at other secondary SEMH providers in Hertfordshire). This allows to access to good provision within the locality.
- The changes will support the Local Authority's approach to reducing the number of SEMH pupils without placement in Hertfordshire.
- Placements will no doubt help alleviate anxiety and distress caused to pupils/families that would otherwise be left without provision.
- The additional building will help tremendously with options for tutor groups/teaching classes and subject delivery.
- The additional numbers provide a solid platform for increased options in relation to curriculum, pupil placement and direct links with peers.

What to do next and by when?

Please respond to this consultation by **Wed 30th June -12.00pm**. You can do this by:

Writing/posting comments to Executive Headteacher, Larwood School, Larwood Drive, Stevenage, Hertfordshire. SG1 5BZ

Emailing comments to admin@larwood.herts.sch.uk

Phone call-01438 236333 and you can leave comments with Emma O'Brien or arrange further discussion with the Headteacher of Brandles School or The Executive Headteacher of Larwood Academy Trust if you wish.

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All comments/information gathered will be collected, summarised and provided as part of the Business Case application made to the Department of Education.

Brandles School

Yours sincerely

S D Trimble

Executive Headteacher

Larwood Academy Trust

D Pearce

Headteacher

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