

SOUTHEND HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

ACADEMY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

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24th March 2021

Consultation – Proposed Autism Resource Base

At Southend High School for Boys (SHSB), we have a strong ethos of inclusivity and take pride in our commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils in our care. The school has a long history of success in supporting young people with additional needs, in both their academic and social progress. NACE (National Association for Able Children in Education) has highlighted our strength in working with ‘multi-exceptional’ pupils (those with SEND who are also more able and talented).

Across the country, many schools with similar successes (including a number of other grammar schools) have worked alongside Local Authorities to strengthen their provision by developing specialist, resourced, bases.

We are very pleased to announce our plans to build upon the existing provision at SHSB by establishing an ‘Autism Resource Base’ (ARB) within the school for a limited number of pupils with *both* an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and evidence of an autistic spectrum condition (ASC).

The Governing Body and Local Authority are fully supportive of this proposal, which will help us to accommodate autistic pupils in an environment in which they can thrive. Additional funding will be provided through Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to enable the school to establish and run the ARB.

Training will be provided for all staff and a programme of awareness and peer support put in place for all pupils. Pupils working in the ARB will reap the rewards of the provision at SHSB. All staff and pupils at SHSB will benefit not only from the additional expertise the ARB brings to the school, but also the implicit value of an ethos that openly embraces the importance of empathy and community support.

The development of an ARB at SHSB would be entirely in keeping with the school’s ‘2020 vision’, which is central to our approach: *“to set all pupils on the path towards young adulthood with the highest aspirations and equipped to make a positive and worthwhile contribution to society.”*



We hope the following questions and answers will explain, in more detail, what we are intending to do at the school.

What is an ARB?

An increasing awareness and understanding of autism has resulted in a significant local and national increase in the number of children and young people with an autism diagnosis.

Many autistic children are able to excel within a mainstream school setting. However, without specialist support, they may struggle to engage because of their additional sensory, social and communication needs.

The ARB will provide this specialist support to enable pupils to access mainstream secondary education through, for example: a support base for pupils to 'check-in' each morning and prepare for the day ahead; access to small group teaching; space for individual study; and access to a sensory space in which to 'retreat' if necessary. The ARB will be staffed throughout the day. Pupils accessing the provision could choose to spend break and lunchtimes there, with their friends who would be welcome to join them at these times.

It is important that the ARB and the pupils accessing it are part of our community at SHSB and included in all aspects of school life. They will not spend all of their time in the ARB but will be integrated into mainstream classes during the school day, where suitable. The aim will be that, over time, pupils will be able to spend at least 80% of their time within mainstream lessons at the school, though the approach will be one which reflects the individual needs of each pupil.

Places in the ARB will be reserved for pupils with *both* an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and evidence of an autistic spectrum condition (ASC). Each pupil's needs and ability will be assessed to identify whether they might benefit from placement within the ARB. Places will be allocated by the Local Authority. There will be a maximum of 3 places available in each of Years 7-11 in addition to the school's normal annual admission (PAN) of 180. Class sizes for timetabled lessons would remain appropriate to the classroom space and level of support available. Funding will be provided through Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to develop an allocated space within the school to accommodate the ARB.

When will the ARB open?

It is intended that the ARB will be in place for first admission in January 2022, with pupil numbers increasing each year, up to the maximum.

How can I give my views?

We would very much like to hear your views on this proposal.

This consultation will run from 24th March to 21st April 2021 and you are invited to submit comments in writing about the proposal above to arbconsultation@shsb.org.uk. Please mark the subject "SHSB ARB consultation".

Alternatively, let us know if you would like an invitation to an informal online consultation event, to be held in the week beginning 12th April.

Following the consultation period, the school will consider all comments received before deciding whether to submit an application to the DfE to effect the change. It is anticipated that a decision will be made early next term, to allow time for building work and staff recruitment if appropriate.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Bevan', followed by a period.

Robin M. Bevan
Headteacher