John O'Gaunt School

Significant Change – proposal for consultation

Excalibur Academies Trust proposes making a change to John O'Gaunt School. This change is considered by the Department for Education (DfE) to be a "significant change" and therefore we are formally consulting with our community and fellow stakeholders.

We are proposing that, in partnership with West Berkshire Council:

- John O'Gaunt School opens a 25-place Specialist Inclusion Base (SIB) on the school site to support pupils with an Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) diagnosis.
- The SIB will form part of the wider Department for Education (DfE) funded rebuild and will provide dedicated accommodation and support for pupils, enabling them to access mainstream curriculum, facilities and wider school life where appropriate.
- The Pupil Admission Number (PAN) of the school will remain at 450, and the PAN for Year 7 (the 'relevant age group' as set out in the Schools Admissions Code 2021) will remain at 90.

This proposed change will require an amendment in the schools funding agreement and DfE registration details.

Rationale for change

Demand for secondary specialist autism provision is growing. Currently, pupils with complex autism are supported across mainstream schools, a small number of existing local specialist settings, independent or non-maintained special schools, out-of-area placements, Education Other Than At School (EOTAS), or alternative provision following exclusion.

Finding suitable secondary school sites for specialist bases is difficult due to building constraints, layout limits, and operational pressures. John O'Gaunt School's selection for the DfE's School Rebuilding Programme - with surveys completed and a full rebuild recommended - creates an opportunity to build dedicated specialist accommodation into the new school buildings.

The SIB would open incrementally in a phased approach starting with a Year 7 cohort and admitting five pupils per year. This supports earlier intervention and smoother integration into secondary school.

Students would also match the admissions requirements as set out in an agreed Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the local authority. This SLA would be formally agreed between all parties following the successful Significant Change Proposal Application to the DfE.

The introduction of a new SIB would not impact or change any of the existing school curriculum or policies and practices.

Benefits for Pupils and the School Community

- **Local, Inclusive Education:** Pupils with complex autism can receive targeted support while staying connected to a mainstream curriculum, peer group, and wider school life, rather than travelling to distant or out-of-area settings.
- **Purpose-Built Design:** Integrating the base into the rebuild allows accommodation and operational links to be planned together rather than retrofitted.
- **Whole-School Culture:** Strong inclusive practice that already exists across leadership, teaching, pastoral, and support staff at John O'Gaunt. However, the addition of a SIB will add additional capacity to our existing SEND provision and enhance the support on offer to all John O'Gaunt pupils, providing greater resources, and the employment of further specialist support staff.

Consultation survey

Excalibur Academies Trust and John O'Gaunt School would appreciate your response to this proposal by answering a quick survey, which contains the following four questions:

1) Do you support the proposal to establish a Specialist Inclusion Base at John O'Gaunt School as outlined in this proposal?
2) What do you see as the main benefits of having a Specialist Inclusion Base?
3) What concerns, if any, do you have about this proposal?
4) Do you have any other comments about the proposal?

We value the voice of our community and would welcome feedback into this consultation. Please complete a short survey, which can be found here. Paper copies of this consultation, the survey and accessible or translated versions of both can be provided upon request to sthorne@johnogaunt.excalibur.org.uk or by calling 01488 682400.

Timeline

This consultation will run for 3 weeks from **Wednesday 25th November to Wednesday 16th December**. The following timeline indicates key dates:

- **Wednesday 25th November** – Consultation opens at 9.00am. Information circulated. Feedback to be gathered via online survey and email/hard copies.
- **Wednesday 2nd December 3.30-4.30pm** – First Q&A session will be held at John O'Gaunt School. If you would like to reserve a place at this session then please contact sthorne@johnogaunt.excalibur.org.uk
- **Thursday 10th December 10.10-11.10am** – Second Q&A session will be held at John O'Gaunt School. If you would like to reserve a place at this session then please contact sthorne@johnogaunt.excalibur.org.uk
- **Monday 14th December** – reminder will be sent out to give feedback. If appropriate, FAQs will address common issues raised in responses to date.
- **Wednesday 16th December** – Consultation closes at 5.00pm

The results of the consultation will be published as soon as possible after all feedback has been collated and considered.