West Hill School
Kingston Road, Leatherhead
Surrey KT22 7PW

Tel: 01372 814714
Email: office@westhill.thpt.org.uk
Web: www.westhillschool.uk

Thursday 15th October 2026

Consultation on proposed change of age range and change of designation at West Hill School from September 2027 onwards

This document explains:

- Our proposal and the reasons for the proposed changes to designation and age range from 4 to 11 years to 4 to 16 years
- The timescale for the consultation
- How you can share your views
- How we will communicate the outcomes of the consultation

West Hill has a proud history of serving children with learning difficulties. In recent years, we have seen growing demand for specialist secondary provision across Surrey. At times, some of our pupils have reached the end of Year 6 without a confirmed secondary Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) placement, creating uncertainty for children and their families. The Howard Partnership Trust, of which West Hill School is part, is therefore consulting on proposals which aim to increase the local specialist provision for secondary age children with SLD and potentially improve continuity of education for pupils with additional needs. This opportunity would be supported through capital works, as part of the SEND Capital Programme, funded by Surrey County Council.

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1. Proposal outline

The proposal consists of two elements:

1. To extend the designated age range of West Hill School from 4 to 11 years to 4 to 16 years
2. To include Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) to the school's designation

We are proposing these changes because we believe it is important that children can access appropriate local specialist provision throughout their educational journey. In recent years, securing specialist secondary placements for pupils with SLD appears to have become increasingly challenging.

In recognising both the current and projected needs of pupils within our community, this broader designation would better reflect the range of learning needs supported within the school and enable us to respond more effectively to future demand.

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2. Objectives

Our primary objective is to provide greater continuity of education for pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties as they move beyond Year 6.

The proposal would help address the shortage of specialist secondary placements by utilising capacity created through falling numbers in some primary year groups and reallocating this capacity to a small specialist secondary provision.

This would increase the availability of local specialist placements both for pupils already attending West Hill School and for other Surrey pupils who require specialist provision in this age range.

We anticipate that the proposal could improve outcomes for children and young people. The proposal aligns with the aspirations of Surrey's Inclusion and Additional Needs Partnership Strategy (2023-2026), which seeks to enable children and young people with additional needs and disabilities to lead the best possible lives.

The proposal is also aligned with wider national SEND priorities, which seek to improve inclusion, strengthen local provision and reduce the need for children and young people to travel significant distances to access appropriate education. Developing additional local specialist capacity supports these aims whilst enabling children to remain connected to their families and local communities.

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3. Proposed timeline

To achieve these objectives, the designated age range of the school would be extended to include pupils aged 11 to 16 alongside the existing primary provision. If approved, the secondary provision would be introduced gradually as follows:

Academic Year	Year Groups Supported
2027-28	Years R to 6 and Year 7 & 8
2028-29	Years R to 6 and Years 7, 8 & 9
2029-30	Years R to 6 and Years 7, 8, 9 & 10
2030-31	Years R to 6 and Years 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11

Proposed Long-Term Model

The school would continue to support pupils with MLD and associated needs within the primary phase, with a planned composition of:

- Three mixed-age classes across Reception, Year 1 and Year 2
- Two classes of 10 pupils (on average) in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6

This would provide 104 planned primary places.

The secondary phase would consist of:

- One class of 10 pupils in each secondary year group (Years 7 to 11) for pupils with SLD in a class based model

This would provide approximately 50 specialist secondary places.

This does not change the overall size of the school in any way which currently has an agreed pupil number of 154 pupils.

Resources and space would be allocated to accommodate secondary-aged pupils, including appropriate facilities, staff development and age-appropriate learning materials.

The curriculum for secondary-aged pupils would focus on developing independence, communication, social skills, employability skills and preparation for adulthood. Learning opportunities would be designed to support pupils in accessing their local community and achieving the best possible outcomes for adult life.

The school would continue to place a strong emphasis on functional communication, personal development and increasing independence, whilst ensuring pupils have opportunities to engage meaningfully with their local community.

Collaboration with Surrey County Council, local partners and specialist education providers would support the successful implementation of the provision. Drawing upon expertise within THPT, who already run two highly successful all-through specialist schools, and through collaboration with specialist secondary colleagues, we are confident that an age-appropriate provision could be developed which supports positive long-term outcomes for pupils.

Engagement with stakeholders would remain central throughout implementation. Pupil and family satisfaction, alongside the overall effectiveness of the provision, would be regularly reviewed and evaluated, with ongoing improvements made in response to feedback.

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4. What would not change?

Whilst this proposal would introduce specialist secondary provision and extend the school's age range, a number of important aspects of West Hill School would remain unchanged:

- West Hill School would continue to be a specialist setting supporting pupils with additional needs
- Existing primary provision would remain in place and continue to be a core part of the school's offer
- Small class sizes and personalised approaches to learning would continue across the school
- Current pupils would continue to receive the support, care and educational provision identified through their individual needs
- The school's values, ethos and commitment to nurturing every child would remain unchanged

- The introduction of secondary provision would be phased carefully over time to ensure that resources, staffing and facilities develop alongside pupil numbers
- Parents and carers would continue to play an important role in shaping provision through regular communication, consultation and feedback opportunities

The intention of the proposal is to build upon West Hill School's existing strengths and expertise whilst extending opportunities for pupils who require specialist secondary provision closer to home.

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5. Process and timescale

The consultation will run from Thursday 15th October 2026 until Thursday 12th November 2026 with views being sought from:

- Parents and carers
- Pupils, where appropriate
- Staff
- Local Board members
- Local Authority representatives
- Other stakeholders and members of the local community

Following the consultation, all responses will be reviewed and considered. A summary of the consultation findings will be presented to the THPT Board of Trustees, who will determine whether the proposal should proceed to the Department of Education for their approval.

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5. Conclusion

This proposal seeks to address a recognised need for additional specialist secondary provision within the local area whilst building upon West Hill School's established expertise in supporting pupils with additional needs.

The proposal aims to provide greater continuity for pupils, reduce uncertainty for families and increase access to local specialist education close to home, whilst preserving the values, ethos and personalised approach that are central to West Hill School.

We welcome the views of all stakeholders and encourage you to take part in the consultation process.

Have your say

It is important that everyone with an interest in the proposal has the opportunity to share their views.

Responses can be submitted by:

- Completing the online response form Public Consultation Response (also available on the school website)
- Emailing your comments to admissions@westhill.thpt.org.uk
- Posting your comments to: Principal, West Hill School, Kingston Road, Leatherhead, Surrey, KT22 7PW

Please include your name and a contact email address with any response submitted.

Responses must be received by 5.00pm on Thursday 12th November 2026.

The outcomes of the consultation will be published on the school website following consideration by the THPT Board of Trustees.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this proposal and for sharing your views.

Best wishes

Abigail Slade
Principal

Vanessa Wallden
Head of Special Phase Improvement Inclusion