

Significant changes consultation - SEN Trust Southend.

Background:

There are four special schools in SEN Trust Southend: - The St. Christopher School, Kingsdown School, Lancaster School and College (Lancaster School) and St. Nicholas School.

They are all SEN Academies, and all pupils must have an EHCP (Education and Health Care Plan) that names the school and the provision required to meet the pupil's needs to attend. All the schools are 'Good' schools, as judged by Ofsted, and have many 'Outstanding' features. Kingsdown School were inspected 9/10th October 2024 and were rated Outstanding in all areas.

They are all popular schools and have increased in size over recent years. The schools work very closely and cooperatively with each other and Southend Local Authority (LA), to meet the increasingly complex needs of the majority of pupils. The number of pupils who have to move away or to boarding provision are reduced due to the high-quality provision in the area. Southend LA is surrounded by Essex LA and a significant number of Essex families choose the schools in the Trust to meet their child's needs. In the school year 2023-24 Essex LA pupils accounted for 11.5% of pupils for The St. Christopher school, 8.5% for Kingsdown School, 25% for Lancaster School & College and 12% for St. Nicholas School.

Over the past 5 years the demand and need for places at all four schools have risen considerably, see the table below for more detailed information.

Kingsdown School	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25*
Funded number of places at the school at that time	120	120	130
Highest number of pupils on roll during the year	125	128	130
LA requests for placements & Tribunal directions during the year.	95	76	29
Lancaster School and College	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25*
Funded number of places at the school at that time	120	120	130
Highest number of pupils on roll during the year	125	132	130
LA requests for placements & Tribunal directions during the year.	37	41	9
St. Nicholas School	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25*
Funded number of places at the school at that time	92	94	108
Highest number of pupils on roll during the year	98	96	100
LA requests for placements & Tribunal directions during the year.	64	52	57
The St. Christopher School	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25*
Funded number of places at the school at that time	235	255	257
Highest number of pupils on roll during the year	242	258	263
LA requests for placements & Tribunal directions during the year.	185	163	92

*As at 7.1.2025

To meet this greater demand for places and the growing complexity of Special Educational Needs, we have been developing as a Trust and would now like to propose some changes. **For clarity, we will not change**



the existing designation of any of the schools or the type of Special Educational needs for which they cater. The staffing and ethos of the schools will remain the same. The aim is to provide better and more appropriate facilities commensurate with the age ranges and numbers in each school.

Proposal 1: Change the admission age range in two of the schools.

Kingsdown School

Current - Pupils can join the school from 3 years old (EYFS) and leave at age 14 (end of Year 9).

Proposal – Pupils can join from 3 years old (EYFS) and would leave at age 11 (end of Year 6).

Lancaster School and College

Current – Pupils can join the school from age 14 (Year 9) to 19 (Year 14)

Proposal – Pupils can join the school from age 11 (Year 7) can remain up until 19 (Year 14) and will continue to offer an increased number of places for the 16-19 provision for Southend pupils.

Rationale: Kingsdown School is the only school in Southend that pupils move on to secondary at age 14, all other pupils move at age 11. (This was imposed on the school from central Government many years ago). There would be a carefully planned and staggered transfer for KS3 pupils from Kingsdown to Lancaster.

This proposal would enable staff at Kingsdown to concentrate on continuing to provide high-quality, and appropriate early years and primary education. It would also enable more pupils to join Kingsdown in the early years' stages, subject to completion of their EHCP and requests from parents. More pupils could then be helped at this earlier stage, providing some with the opportunity to be supported and the possibility to attend a mainstream environment.

When: Starting in September 2026.

These changes would be introduced gradually to enable a successful transition. There would be a carefully planned and staggered transfer of the KS3 pupils from Kingsdown to Lancaster to ensure the transition was successful.

September 2026 –Pupils - Years 8 and 9 transfer to Lancaster

September 2027- Pupils -Years 7 and 8 transfer to Lancaster

September 2028- pupils - Years 6 and 7 transfer to Lancaster

How: physical building additional capacity on sites:

Plans are currently in preparation to increase the capacity of the school buildings at Lancaster site: planning permission has been granted to build a new multipurpose hall for PE/sports and creative arts to include a separate, purpose-built music/drama room. The current hall and kitchens are to be repurposed to create 3 new classrooms to support the proposed new increased age range of pupils.



Kingsdown School is part of the, Government funded, school re-building programme due to the issues with RACC. The current building will be utilised until any re-build is completed. We will not know for certain the timescales and details of any new build until the DfE meet with the school in April 2025. Currently the building is now fully utilised, safe and able to provide education for up to 120 pupils.

Proposal 2: Increase the age range of pupils at St. Nicholas School to provide an additional 12 places for Years 5/6 (age 9-11).

St Nicholas School currently has 108 places for pupils in school years 7-11 (ages 11-16). The age range will be increased, from September 2026, in a managed way to enable greater success of pupils who require the type of provision offered by the school. Pupils all have an EHCP, but have more 'moderate' learning needs and some minor behavioural barriers to accessing the curriculum. It is not a school for those with significant/complex learning difficulties or extreme behavioural challenges.

Rationale: One class of Years 5 and 6 pupils, (maximum 12 pupils), to be taught within the school. Pupils will require an EHCP but be able to access most aspects of the curriculum with appropriate support. The specialist support systems and staff provided by the school would enable pupils to access an appropriately differentiated curriculum so that they can succeed. There are an increasing number of pupils across the area who are not accessing education successfully. This class would cater for such pupils before they become complete school refusers or increasingly alienated from the school situation and more difficult to reach at age 11. Some of these pupils could then return to mainstream schools at age 11 if successful and appropriate.

Summary of the future provision across the Trust

The St. Christopher School will not be changing significantly but would be developing the buildings and classroom areas for early years provision. Although the school is already designated to take pupils from 3 years old, it rarely has any pupils pre statutory school age so is developing new classroom areas to suit these pupils more. The aim would be to allow more younger pupils with SEN to either return to, or start in, mainstream schools with appropriate support. The changes in the other schools within the Trust will enable some current pupils with more significant learning needs, in addition to their autism, to move to Lancaster at Year 7 rather than in Year 9.

The proposed number of dedicated funded places in the schools to be increased as follows:

Kingsdown School: 130 places for pupils aged 3-11 (no increase in overall number) but providing more places for younger pupils. Introduction of an early years' assessment unit for pupils aged 3-5.

Lancaster school and college: 130 places for pupils aged 14-19 currently

130 to 150 places – September 2026

150 to 160 places – September 2027

St. Nicholas School: 108 places – currently



120 places for September 2026 - age range to increase for a Year 5/6 group (age 9-11- maximum 12 places).

The St. Christopher School: Places for pupils aged 3-16 to remain at 250

12 places in the 16-19 provision.

Discussions about these proposals have been on-going with Southend LA officers and commissioners. They have been fully involved and are supportive of the plans.

Consultation Process: This is a consultation document on proposed changes to schools within SEN Trust Southend schools. The full Consultation will be sent to all parties and will start 'officially' on 23rd January 2025 and finish on 21st February 2025.

We invite feedback from parents, guardians, Local Authorities and other stakeholders such as mainstream schools and colleges.

How to provide feedback: Consultation/information meetings for parents of pupils currently in the schools will be held at:

- . Kingsdown School on Thursday 23rd January 2025 at 1.30 p.m. or 5 p.m.
- . Lancaster School on Friday 24th January 2025 at 10.30 a.m.
- . St. Nicholas School on Thursday 30th January 2025 at 2:30 pm

Please complete the feedback form provided by the school or submit your feedback via email to ngarrett@SENTrustSouthend.co.uk or via letter to:

*N Garrett
Trust Governance Professional
c/o The St Christopher School
Mountdale Gardens
Leigh-on-Sea
Essex
SS9 4AW*

Feedback via all formats must be returned by close of business on Friday 21st February 2025.

Next Steps

Following the consultation, we will review all feedback and make a final decision on the proposal/s and publish the new admission arrangements for September 2026. These will be published before the end of the school year 2025.

Thank you for your participation

Jackie Mullan

CEO of SEN Trust Southend

