



Acting Headteacher: **Mrs Claudia Thiele** BEd Hons NPQSL, NPQH

21st May 2024

Dear Parents & Carers,

Hertfordshire County Council's statutory consultation process on the proposed enlargement of Lonsdale School from September 2024, through the closure of the residential offer at the school on 31 August 2024

On 18 September 2023, Hertfordshire County Council's Cabinet approved the commencement of consultation on the proposed enlargement of Lonsdale School by 20 day places from 1 September 2024, through the closure of the residential offer at the school on 31 August 2024. The public consultation was held between 26 September and 30 October 2023, inviting anyone with an interest to comment on the proposal.

On 12 February 2024, Cabinet considered all consultation responses and authorised for the next step in the consultation process to take place, the publishing of a statutory notice. The statutory notice was published in the local newspaper and on the county council's website on 26 February 2024, kick-starting the four week statutory notice (representation) period, where again, anyone with an interest was invited to comment on the proposal. The representation period ended on 24 March 2024.

On 13 May 2024, having reviewed the responses to the statutory notice, Cabinet took the final decision to approve the proposal to enlarge Lonsdale School by 20 additional day places from 1 September 2024 through the closure of the residential provision on 31 August 2024. Before any Cabinet decision can be implemented, there is a period of five working days where decisions may be called in for scrutiny. For this proposal, this period ended at 5pm on 20 May 2024.

***The Comet's* online article**

It has come to our attention that early in the morning on 20 May 2024, *The Comet* published an online article stating that Cabinet had approved the proposal to enlarge Lonsdale School through the closure of the residential provision. As this had not yet been ratified, we were unable to communicate the final decision. In line with the county council's advice, we had always planned to write to parents and carers on 21 May, once the scrutiny period had ended for this proposal. I am sorry if this meant that you read about it in advance of us writing to you today.

Next steps

As the decision has now been made, the county council will continue to work very closely with Lonsdale School on taking the proposal forward. Whilst there are no children currently accessing the residential provision, pupil and staff safety will be of the upmost importance as we work to remodel the former residential provision, creating new learning spaces as well as a dedicated preparing-for-adulthood area, in preparation for admitting 20 additional pupils. This positive development provides an education provision for families currently unable to access education and a unique learning space for young people with PNI to continue their studies and develop the skills and resilience they need to move into adulthood.

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We are working on the basis that these 20 additional day places will be phased, to ensure that there is a smooth and well managed transition for pupils and to reduce any impact on pupils already attending Lonsdale School. Places will be made available once the school is adequately staffed to accommodate these additional pupils.

As works progress, the school will keep parents and carers updated through regular letters, newsletter articles, school communications and the school website.

The school welcomes parents' views, questions and ideas, as well as those of staff and students, as we move through this process together.

With kind regards,

Mrs Claudia Thiele
Acting Headteacher

Mrs Chandra Green
Chair of Governors

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