

BuDS explanation of Buckinghamshire Council's Specialist Teaching Consultation 2021



What this could mean for your child with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or an Education & Health Care Plan (EHCP)

What is Specialist Teaching?

- Specialist Teachers offer support and assistance to pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). They carry out the statutory duties and assessments in relation to pupils' Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- Specialist teachers are part of the Council's Integrated SEND Service. The service consists of specialist professionals like Educational Psychologists and Communication and Interaction Specialist Teachers.
- These professionals have qualifications and/or expertise to work with pupils with a range of needs for example, autism spectrum, speech, language and communication needs, sensory impairments (hearing and visual impairment) and pupils with difficulties in understanding and learning, for example, those with Down Syndrome.
- If a pupil has an EHCP Specialist Teachers will have already assessed them and written reports to describe their needs. They will have also told the school. They will carry on with assessments regularly.

How Specialist Teaching Works?

The Process

- Schools refer to Specialist Teachers when a pupil needs direct specialist input beyond what the school typically offers.
- If a pupil has an EHCP, parents/carers will have been asked to give permission when they were referred to the Specialist Teacher who carried out an assessment. They helped to assess and describe the pupil's needs for their EHCP. They probably work directly with the pupil and their teacher and monitor their progress in school. They help make sure that their EHCP describes them well and is meeting their needs.
- The level of support offered by the Integrated Service is currently banded according to needs, this is called tiered support.



- There is further support for schools through training, provided at an additional cost, from the Integrated SEND service. Staff can also attend network meetings.
- How Specialist Teaching currently works is explained fully in a document called, 'Integrated SEND Service: Specialist Teacher Support A tiered approach to supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities'. You can find it here:
<https://schoolsweb.bucksc.gov.uk/media/54894/tiered-support.pdf>
- If a pupil has an EHCP they are likely to be banded at Tier 3 or above. This means they have *direct* involvement with a Specialist Teacher who sees them in school, offers direct intervention to assess their needs and progress and develops provision for them.

The Capacity

- At the moment the Council states that Specialist Teachers are offering support *only* to those pupils who have an EHCP. This means that some pupils, those who have SEN Support for example, are not having their needs identified or supported because they only have enough Specialist Teachers to meet provision set out in EHCPs.
- They also state that there has been an increase in the number of pupils requiring an EHCP from last year. The Council says that they do not have sufficient resources to meet this future demand.

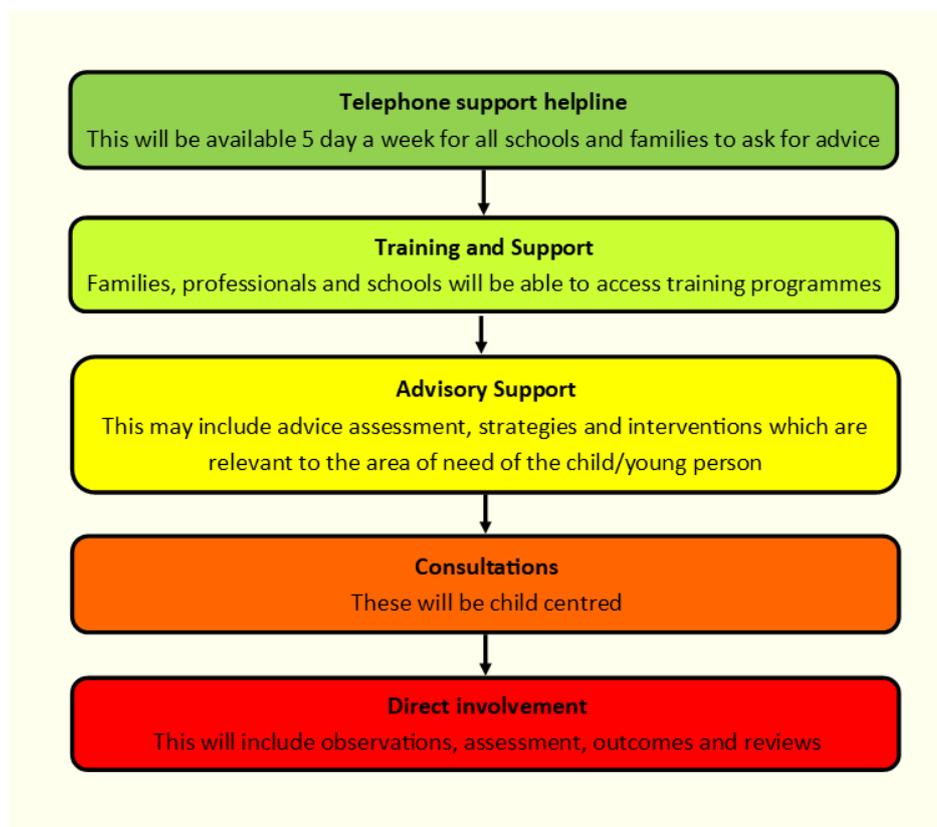
The New Specialist Teaching Service

Summary

- The Council want to change the way they work and move away from the tiered system to a new approach where Specialist Teachers take on a broader advisory role. The service wants to operate a 5-day telephone helpline that schools and parents can access for advice, instead of just one day.
- There is no proposal to change the service for pupils with sensory impairment, as in law these pupils must be supported by specialists who hold specific qualifications. However, to free up Specialist Teachers to make the new proposals happen the Council want to change the way Specialist Teachers support all other pupils with EHCPs.

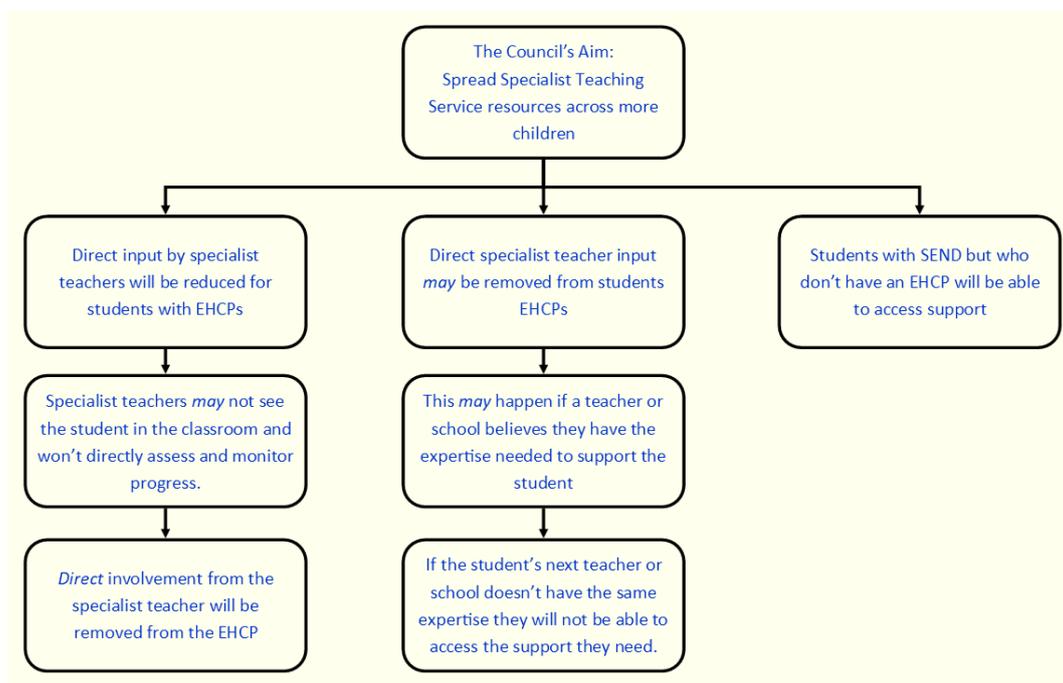
The Process

- Schools and other settings will make individual support referrals. They must say what they are already doing to support the pupil.
- Referrals will be prioritised to see who is the best professional to help. This could be someone like a specialist teacher or educational psychologist, but they may also decide this help isn't needed.
- This is the order in which support will be offered in:



The Capacity

The diagram below shows what the Council hopes to do and sets out how it might affect how much support pupils will get.



Potential Risks

The changes proposed by the Council may make support for SEND pupils worse not better, if the following things happened:

- The specialist service may be so diluted across a wide range of pupils (both those with support of an EHCP and those without) that individual pupils do not get the level of support that they need.
- The progress that a pupil makes probably will not be monitored by specialist teachers and school staff may not have the skills to pick up that a pupil is not making satisfactory progress.
- The changing needs of a pupil probably will not be monitored by specialist teachers and school staff may not have the skills to pick up that a pupil's needs have changed.
- Information about the pupil's needs may not be passed between schools and school staff without the involvement of specialist teachers.
- EHCPs may become less specific and accurate and so it may be more difficult to make sure pupils get the support they need. If EHCPs are not very specific, it will be harder for parents to argue that their child is not getting the support they are entitled to.
- School staff may not have the specialist knowledge and skills to support pupils and it may take a long time for them to be retrained to be able to support pupils properly.
- School staff will have to spend a lot more time assessing, monitoring and supporting pupils and they may not have the time to do this. More school staff will be needed,

but schools may not be able to afford this. If school staff do not have enough time to do everything, supporting SEND pupils may get pushed to the bottom of the list.

- If school staff do not have the knowledge, skills or time to support SEND pupils and make education accessible to them, this may make pupils more anxious and upset. This will not only affect their education and learning, but their everyday life as well.

Potential Benefits

Buckinghamshire Council claim that the changes will have the following benefits. However, there is no guarantee that these benefits will happen, and in other areas where these changes have happened the benefits have not been seen.

- Parents and families will be able to talk to specialist teachers via the helpline.
- SEND pupils without an EHCP may get better support because school staff will be able to talk to specialist.
- Possibly, school staff being responsible for specialist support for pupils with an EHCP will improve support for those pupils because school staff are in more frequent contact with the pupil than specialist teachers.
- Possibly, school staff being responsible for specialist support for pupils with an EHCP will improve support for those pupils because school staff will have responsibility for supporting those pupils rather than specialist teachers.
- School staff may become more skilled and experienced in supporting SEND pupils and so teaching will improve.

What To Do Now

You can respond to the consultation by clicking on this link:

<https://yourvoicebucks.citizenspace.com/schools/specialist-teaching-2021/>

When you are responding, you might like to think about the following things:

- Tell them about how you think the changes will affect your child/children who has SEND and/or an EHCP.
- You might like to mention any of the risks or benefits included above which you think might affect your child/children.

It would be helpful to BuDS to know how people have responded to the Council's consultation. This will help us to make sure we can give the right support to try and get the best outcome possible for the SEND children and young people of Buckinghamshire. If you would like to share with BuDS what you have included in your response, please contact us at: info@buds.org.uk