

Report to CABINET

High Needs Provision in Mainstream Settings **(Halcyon Way Primary School – Specialist Provision)**

Officer Contact: Paul Tinsley (Director of Education, Early Years and Skills)

Report Author: Jason Hudson (Schools Capital Project Manager)

7th September 2026

Reason for Decision

This report seeks Cabinet approval for a capital project to expand specialist provision operated by Kingfisher Learning Trust at Halcyon Way School. The project will increase local specialist capacity for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), helping to meet growing demand and ensuring that more children and young people can access appropriate provision within Oldham.

The report also seeks approval for the allocation of capital funding from the High Needs Provision Capital Allocation (HNPCA) and Basic Need Grant to support delivery of the scheme.

Executive Summary

This report relates to a proposal by Kingfisher Learning Trust to expand specialist provision at Halcyon Way School. The proposal has been developed sufficiently to enable Cabinet to consider the allocation of capital funding.

The project will create 20 additional specialist places for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), increasing local specialist capacity and supporting more children and young people to access appropriate provision within their local community. The proposal forms part of the Local Authority's wider approach to developing a more sustainable continuum of provision across Oldham. Alongside investment in inclusive practice and additional capacity within mainstream schools, the Local Authority must ensure there is sufficient specialist provision available for children and young people whose needs require specialist placement.

Currently the Local Authority has High Needs Capital Allocation Funding, which is released to school upon application and consideration by panel. It is proposed that where projects will generate additional places these projects are funded from the HNPCA Grant provision

Project Outlines and Recommendation

Halcyon Way Primary School

Halcyon Way Primary School serves the Chadderton area of Oldham and is operated by Kingfisher Learning Trust. The school provides specialist education for children aged 4–11 with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), including pupils with complex learning needs and associated Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN)

Demand for specialist placements has increased significantly in recent years and Halcyon Way School is expected to reach its planned capacity of 140 pupils by September 2026. The Local Authority continues to experience increasing demand for specialist placements for children and young people whose needs require specialist provision

This proposal seeks funding to expand specialist provision through the installation of a new modular building. The development will provide additional teaching accommodation, specialist learning spaces and associated facilities designed to meet the needs of pupils with complex SEND.

The project will create 20 additional specialist places and contribute to increasing specialist capacity within the borough. The additional places will support local sufficiency, provide greater opportunities for children and young people to access specialist provision closer to home and reduce reliance on independent and out-of-borough placements where needs can be appropriately met within Oldham.

The total cost of this project is estimated to be in the region of £346,000 (a total of £380,600 when including 10% contingency) following completion of a feasibility study by Kingfisher Learning Trust. It is proposed that this project is funded from the HNPCA

1 Background

1.1 Demand for specialist provision for children and young people with SEND has increased significantly in recent years, resulting in growing pressure on local specialist capacity and an increased reliance on independent and out-of-borough placements. The recommended option will enable the Council to invest in additional specialist provision through the expansion of Halcyon Way School, increasing local capacity and supporting children and young people to access appropriate provision closer to home.

1.2 The proposal aligns with Oldham's SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2023–2027 and the Local SEND Reform Plan, which seek to strengthen inclusion, improve local sufficiency and ensure children and young people can access the right support at the right time. As part of this approach, the Local Authority is working with schools and trusts to increase capacity across the continuum of provision, including both mainstream and specialist settings.

Whilst the reform programme places a strong emphasis on enabling more children and young people to have their needs met successfully within mainstream education wherever appropriate, there remains a cohort of children and young people whose needs require specialist provision. The expansion of Halcyon Way School will help ensure those pupils can access appropriate specialist provision locally whilst supporting a more coherent and sustainable SEND system across the borough.

2 Procurement Implications

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- 2.1 There are no procurement implications arising from the report

3 Risk Assessments

- 3.1 The Council will require confirmation from the trust that appropriate insurance is in place before releasing funds for the works

4 Current Position

- 4.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to secure sufficient educational provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). In line with Oldham's SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2023–2027, the Local SEND Reform Plan and the government's Every Child Achieving and Thriving reforms, the Local Authority is committed to developing a more inclusive and sustainable continuum of provision that enables children and young people to access the right support, in the right place, at the right time.

Through its SEND Reform Plan, the Local Authority is working with schools and trusts to strengthen inclusive practice and increase the availability of support within mainstream settings wherever needs can be met successfully. Alongside this, there remains a need to ensure sufficient specialist provision is available for children and young people whose needs require specialist placement.

Demand for specialist provision has increased significantly in recent years, placing pressure on local capacity and resulting in a growing number of children and young people awaiting access to appropriate specialist placements. The expansion of provision at Halcyon Way School will strengthen local sufficiency, expand local capacity and improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. It will also support the long-term sustainability of the High Needs Block by reducing reliance on higher-cost independent and out-of-borough provision where needs can be effectively met within Oldham.

- 4.2 To ensure the effective operation and long-term sustainability of the provision, the Local Authority will enter into a formal commissioning contract with Kingfisher Learning Trust. The service specification of the contract will set out the admissions arrangements, placement criteria, governance arrangements, performance expectations, financial responsibilities and reporting requirements. This will support ongoing oversight of quality, demand and outcomes, ensuring the provision contributes to the Local Authority's sufficiency, inclusion and SEND reform objectives whilst delivering value for money.

5 Options/Alternatives

- 5.1 Option 1: Approve the capital investment required to expand specialist provision at Halcyon Way School, supporting the ambitions of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2023–2027 and the Local SEND Reform Plan.
- 5.2 Option 2: Do not approve the project, resulting in a missed opportunity to increase local specialist capacity and support the delivery of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2023–2027 and the Local SEND Reform Plan.

6 Preferred Option

6.1 Option 1

7 Consultation

- 7.1 Consultation has taken place with Kingfisher Learning Trust and relevant Local Authority officers responsible for SEND sufficiency, capital programmes and school place planning.

8 Financial Implications (Capital)

- 8.1 The cost of the associated works including a contingency of 10% is £380,600 this will be paid annually over 5 years and will be a charge to the educational capital programme 2025/26, which will be funded from the HNPCA/Basic Needs Grant. Any unspent budget will be returned to the HNPCA/Basic Need provision budget. This school is part of Kingfisher Learning Trust and as such can reclaim their own VAT, therefore any repayments to the school will be paid net of VAT

The works will be commissioned directly by the school and funding paid annually over 5 years to the school as part of a Grant Funding Agreement

On completion of the 5 annual payments OBC will not provide any further funding for this project

Paula Buckley – Finance Manager

8.2 **Financial Implications – (Resources)**

The proposal to expand the specialist provision operated by Kingfisher Learning Trust at Halcyon Way School will be funded from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant. The High Needs Block covers funding to support provision for pupils and students with SEND who require additional resources to participate in education and learning, from their early years to age 25 in a range of provision including special schools, mainstream schools, alternative provision, and independent specialist provision. The funding also contributes towards council centrally retained expenditure for High Needs

Expanding the capacity at Halcyon Way by 20 places would result in an additional £419k of required funding per annum from the High Needs Block, split between base and high needs top-up funding. This would be offset, in part, by savings in other areas of the High Needs Block where the pupils attending may be currently accessing funding

Martin Heap – Senior Accountant

9 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The proposal will benefit the students at the school and further demonstrate the ongoing commitment by the Council to the education of the children of the Borough with particular emphasis upon the most vulnerable children in the borough

Alex Bougatef - Borough Solicitor and Monitoring Officer

- 9.2 The proposal is to make a grant to Kingfisher Learning Trust to be used as capital investment to expand specialist provision at Halcyon Way School, supporting the

ambitions of the SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2023–2027 and the Local SEND Reform Plan

- 9.3 Making the grant is in scope of section 1 of the Localism Act 2021 which give Local Authorities a general power of competence to do anything which an individual may do for the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident or present in their area
- 9.4 Officers must work with legal colleagues to approve and formalise the terms of any grant agreement or MOU in conjunction with Finance and Audit colleagues
- 9.5 The Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) and Project Manager must ensure that Subsidy Control is considered in consultation with Legal Services and that all relevant assessments are made and recorded, all relevant notices are published, and all relevant regulations and legislation is complied with to the satisfaction of the Section 151 Officer and in compliance with the Financial Procedure Rules of the Council. External advice may be needed to support these activities which will be a cost to the Project. A grant can amount to a subsidy under the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Therefore, a subsidy control analysis of the grant funding and what it will be used for is essential before payment of the grant. This process will be undertaken by the Project Team led by the SRO with support and input from Legal Services, Finance and other relevant officers
- 9.6 In the event that any grant is determined to be a subsidy, details regarding the same must be published within three months of award for all subsidies in excess of £100,000 and the Report Author and SRO will need to liaise with Finance and Audit colleagues in this regard
- 9.7 The Transparency obligations of the Council must be complied with
- 9.8 The terms of the Grant Agreement must be reviewed and agreed by the SRO along with legal and finance colleagues. Provisions of note and/or provisions with associated risk should be highlighted to officers for consideration

Bryan Boese –Solicitor

10 Equality Impact Assessment, including implications for Children and Young People

- 10.1 There are no negative implications for vulnerable groups or children and young people.

11 Key Decision

- 11.1 Yes

12 Key Decision Reference

- 12.1 [EDS-03-25](#)

13 Background Papers

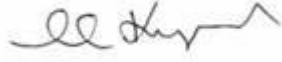
- 13.1 SEND and Inclusion Strategy 2023-2027

14 Appendices

- 14.1 Proposed floor plan supplied by Portakabin HD/14725.01 Rev B

Approved by the Chief Executive following consultation with the political group leaders.
Decision made under the authorisation contained in Section 9C – Delegations to Specific Officers of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Council Constitution for the Chief Executive to take any emergency decisions in respect of the Council's executive functions.

Signed:



Shelley Kipling, Chief Executive

Dated: 8th September 2026

Date of Group Leaders meeting

7th September 2026