

St Mary Magdalene Courtyard Academy: Section 9 Impact Assessment Academies Act Duty

Background on St Mary Magdalene Courtyard Academy

St Mary Magdalene Academy Courtyard (The Courtyard) is a special school which will, when full, have an intake of 36 pupils aged 14 – 19. The proposers are an existing Academy Trust, (St Mary Magdalene Academy) who will link up with The Courtyard to create a multi-academy funding agreement.

The Courtyard will provide for students with 'Autistic Spectrum Disorder' (ASD) and Speech Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). St Mary Magdalene Academy is itself a specialist provider of Key Stage 3 provision for students with ASD. It has strong links with two special schools in Islington - The Bridge School and Samuel Rhodes School - that provide support and expertise in curriculum construction and delivery.

Admissions

The Admissions Code is not applicable to special Free Schools. All students admitted to The Courtyard must have a Statement identifying a specific special need for communication and interpersonal skills. Students are likely to have been diagnosed with Autism or ASD or have SLCN.

Characteristics of the area (Islington Local Authority)

There are 45 primary schools, 10 secondary schools and 3 special schools in Islington. Within Islington Local Authority there are currently over 100 students with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in mainstream schools.

Two of Islington's special schools, The Bridge School and Richard Cloudsley School, provide for young people up to the age of 19. The Samuel Rhodes School, caters for pupils between 5 and 16. Both The Bridge School and Richard Cloudesley School have seen an increase in admissions, particularly over the last two years.

The Bridge School is an All Age Special School specialising in education for those with severe communication and interaction difficulties. Strong links already exist between the St Mary Magdalene Academy and The Bridge School and the Academy is engaged in educating students from the Bridge in a mainstream setting.

The number of children with more complex needs, particularly in the area of ASD has recently increased. For this group the local authority will need to access approximately 100 places per annum over the next five years. The local authority will therefore need to consider developing further specialist provision, especially for higher functioning ASD children.

Impact on other schools in the area

As The Courtyard is a special school it does not have a defined catchment area and referrals will be made through its own and surrounding Local Authorities.

For the purpose of this assessment we have created a proxy catchment area of special schools within a 5 mile radius from the Free School. This is because parents would be prepared to travel a greater distance because of the specialist nature of the school.

Below is a table showing the likely impact of the proposed school on special schools within Islington. It is our view that because of the size and specialism of the proposed Free School, it is expected to have a minimal impact on all special schools located in Islington and its neighbouring boroughs.

The impact of The Courtyard on other special schools in:

Islington Local Authority

Name	Distance and Local Authority	Age Range	No of pupils	Ofsted Ratings	Impact Rating
The Bridge School	0.9m	2-19	138	Outstanding	Minimal
Richard Cloudsley School	1.7m	2-19	65	Outstanding	Minimal
Samuel Rhodes School	1.7m	5-16	83	Good	Minimal

The neighbouring local authorities to Islington include Haringey (four special schools), Camden (three special schools), Hackney (five special schools) and City of London (no special schools).

Haringey

Name	Distance	Age Range	No of pupils	Ofsted Ratings	Impact Rating
Blanche Nevile	3.8m	3-19	70	Good	Minimal
Riverside School	3.2m	11-16	120	Good	Minimal
Vale Resource Base	4.5m	2-16	80	Outstanding	Minimal
William Harvey	3.6m	3-16	55	Outstanding	Minimal

School					
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Camden

Name	Distance	Age Range	No of Pupils	Ofsted Ratings	Impact Ratings
Chalcot School	2.2m	11-16	35	Good	Minimal
Frank Barnes School for Deaf Children	2.7m	2-11	38	Outstanding	Minimal
Jack Taylor School	3.2	5-19	58	Satisfactory	Minimal

Hackney

Name	Distance	Age Range	No of Pupils	Ofsted Ratings	Impact Ratings
Downsview School	2.4m	5-11	34	Satisfactory	Minimal
Horizon School	1.4m	5-16	80	Good	Minimal
Ickburgh School	2.4m	2-19	73	Good	Minimal
Side by Side Kids School	2.8	2-16	57	Good	Minimal
Stormont House School	2.2m	11-16	96	Outstanding	Minimal

There are no special needs schools in the City of London.

Local Authority View

Islington Local Authority is supportive of the proposal to open The Courtyard and have confirmed that where certain conditions were met they would be willing to name the school in Part IV of a child's Statement.

The local authority supported the Academy in putting together a local/regional needs assessment that underpinned their application and have been closely informed over their proposals, plans and development of the project. In addition they have supported the Academies efforts to consult with the local community, and have willingly joined various meetings with parents, schools and neighbouring LAs.

It is Islington Local Authority's view that the proposed provision will help extend regional provision for children and young people with ASD, particularly at the 'high functioning' end of the spectrum, at a time when the number of children diagnosed with this area of need is increasing nationally.

The local authority was however concerned about the recent fall in GCSE results at St Mary Magdalene Academy and didn't wish to see the setting up of The Courtyard divert attention away from the performance of the Academy. Officials subsequently raised these issues with the Academy Principal and were assured that the Academy understood the importance of addressing this issue.

S10 Consultation

The S10 consultation was adequate in registering the views of the local community whether on-line, in person or by post. Although the consultation response only small (11 responses) more than half supported the specialised provision provided and for the Trustees to enter into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State.

As part of the consultation, public meeting were held with parents, students and local residents. The meetings were positive with those attending highly engaged. As a result the Trust has been able to establish positive links with the local residents association and the friends of St Mary Magdalene Gardens.

Conclusion

Officials consider the likely impact on maintained schools, Academies, FE institutions and other special schools in the area by establishing The Courtyard as proposed would be negligible. It is considered appropriate, therefore, for the Secretary of State to enter into a Funding Agreement with the Academy Trust based on these conclusions.