

Dawlish Federation of Special Schools

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Executive Principal: Mr M Rose - M.Ed., B.Sc., (Hons.), N.P.Q.H.

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The Merger – An Update

Dear Parents and Carers

I am delighted to inform you that Devon County Council's Cabinet has approved the proposal to merge Oaklands Park and Ratcliffe Schools to provide a single provision across both sites for pupils aged 3-19 years. The report and minutes from the Cabinet Meeting are available via: <http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MIId=2133&x=1>

The Governing Body considered that the merged schools and changes to provision will provide future sustainability, fulfil demand for this specialist provision and meet both theirs and the LA's statutory duties to provide places and for pupils to be able to attend their local school.

The residential provisions will be merged and capacity reduced to 35 weekly residential places from April 2018 with the two schools merging in August 2018. We will reopen as one Weekly Residential Special School in September 2018.

The new school will provide a continuum of provision for pupils with communication and interaction difficulties, ASC (Autism Spectrum Condition), learning difficulties and social development needs.

We have been working with the young people from both schools in preparation for the merger and will continue to do so with an understanding that this change presents challenges for some of our pupils. Following notification of the final approval from Cabinet on the 27 February 2018. I am delighted to share our exciting plans and will now update you on a regular basis.

EDUCATION UPDATE

Provision

Our new school will provide education and care for pupils with a range of needs. It is of paramount importance to us that each child receives the most appropriate curriculum alongside peers who they can equitably share all the opportunities we offer. We are excited that all the pupils will be able to access the shared resources across the new school, further enhancing our ability to meet their individual needs.

Although pupils will have access to resources across the new school, all classes except one lower school class from Ratcliffe will be based in their current location. Parents of pupils in this lower school class at Ratcliffe have already been advised of this move. The vast majority of pupils will be primarily educated within the same class group and on the same site as they are currently.

The current Oaklands Park site will include:

- EYFS,
- Key Stage 1
- Key Stage 2
- Three classes of Key Stage 3/4 (whose needs will be best met within the current Oaklands Park School environment)
- Post 16 (who will be based in a separate building on the Oaklands Park School site)

The current Ratcliffe School site will include:

- Key Stage 3
- Key Stage 4
- One class of Key Stage 2 (due to their level of social and emotional development)

In September we will as always experience some changes within class groups as new pupils enter our school and existing pupils move into the next year group or key stage. It is however anticipated that most of our pupils will remain in classes with their existing peers. Unfortunately at this stage it is not possible to issue complete class groups, however we are able to advise on which site your son or daughter will be primarily educated.

From September 2018 will be taught within a primarily based on the current Ratcliffe School/Oaklands Park School site.

Some pupils currently access aspects of the curriculum within both of our schools. This will continue to be the case where appropriate; enabling pupils improved access to learning opportunities and resources.

Please be assured that, for any movement of pupils, parents will be fully informed beforehand and pupils will be supported to ensure that their transition is a happy, safe and successful one.

School Name

The decision to name the new school is imminent so if parents have any last minute ideas please let us know ASAP!

Staff

To support the merger process and on-going school improvement, Mrs Nicola Jones has joined us in the capacity of Interim Head of Education until the end of the Summer Term. Nicola who joins us from the Learning Academy Partnership, has had a highly successful career as a senior leader across several schools. Her specialisms are English and school improvement. She will work as part of our leadership team and is excited to be joining us in this new role to support on-going school improvement and the transition to create a new school. Mrs Gillian Douglas from Babcock LPD, education support and improvement service, continues to support both schools.



Nicola Jones
Interim Head of Education

RESIDENTIAL UPDATE

The merged residential provision will launch at the start of the Summer term. The transition of some of our residential young people has started, the girls have already moved from Exe House to The Elms. This has been a great success, the original transition plan of two weeks was reduced by the girls themselves to only two days. We are extremely pleased at how well they have settled in. They have already been out shopping to personalise their new rooms, taken part in lots of group activities and have made new friends within the Residences.

The move for some of the boys from Culm and Dart House has already started too. Their transition is planned to be made over two weeks, as with the girls, and they have already picked out their own rooms.

Our plans have already been modified following feedback from our young people; their further input and your views are welcomed. These are most important in ensuring the success of the residential merge. We will continue to review and refine our plans and procedures to ensure the transition of all the young people is as successful as possible.

Residential open afternoon and answers to questions

Parents, carers and social workers were invited to an afternoon of tea and cakes, by way of an informal meeting to see the accommodation and answer any questions regarding the merger. Various questions were asked, of which the answers are below:

- ***What is the plan for the transition of the young people?***

Every young person has their own personalised transition plan. The mix of the residential pupils in each house has been made on a “needs” and “developmental” basis.

- ***What will happen to the empty buildings?***

The residential houses which are left empty after the transition will not be empty for long! We plan on refurbishing them for educational use and there are plans to use one of

them for a new youth club which will benefit all of the young people at the school. We will let you know what the full plans are at a later date.

- ***Are any of the residential Oaklands Park School young people moving to houses on the Ratcliffe School site?***

The short answer to this is no. This is not part of the current plan.

- ***How and what is being communicated to the children and is there a support plan in place for those affected?***

In order to make transitions successful with the least impact on the young people, James Watson, Head of Care, spoke to all of the young people on a one to one basis to get to know them personally and reassure them about the merge. In addition, all of the members of the care team from Ratcliffe and Oaklands Park have been visiting both sites regularly to get to know the young people. The young people have also had sessions with their Link/Key Workers and have met the care staff working in their new accommodation and chosen their new rooms. Various after school activities have been organised to introduce the young people to each other, suppers and film nights have taken place and visits between the two sites have been encouraged.

The close relationships between the young people and their care workers will be utilised to support them; to answer any questions or address any issues that they have. The staff are committed to making the transitions for each young person as successful and as smooth as possible. If any parent of a residential young person is unsure of anything or has any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact **James Watson, Head of Care**. His telephone number is **01626 895973**. Alternatively, his email is jwatson@oaklandspark.devon.sch.uk He is very happy to discuss any part of the residential merger or transition with you.

- ***How do you plan to manage the older boys with the younger boys, especially with sharing of age appropriate information?***

The mix of the residential pupils in each house has been made on a “needs” and “developmental” basis. There are differences in the ages of some of the young people in each house. However, we have carefully considered the mix of young people to ensure they are alongside peers who will positively impact their residential experience and holistic development.

Our New Care Team

Our new care team has been made up of Staff from both schools. We have four team leaders who will be in charge of one residence each. A team of care staff working with each team leader will support the young people in their house providing high quality care and a wide range of activities to participate in during the week.

We will continue to provide a wide variety of activities in the evenings and actively seek input from the young people to develop what we offer throughout the term.

OTTER HOUSE	CULM HOUSE	ROWAN LODGE
 <p>Simon Thurgood Team Leader</p>	 <p>Tom Davis Team Leader</p>	 <p>Pam Matson Team Leader</p>
 <p>Amanda Graham</p>	 <p>Cavin Hexter</p>	 <p>Sam Poole</p>
 <p>Tim Blight</p>	 <p>Kelly Spencer</p>	 <p>Tom Allen</p>
 <p>Chris Heard</p>	 <p>Jude Goodwin</p>	 <p>Emma Monnington (PT)</p>

THE ELMS

 <p>Helen Stone Team Leader</p>
 <p>Cathy Manley</p>
 <p>Jane Robbarts</p>

Meet Our New Care Team

AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

 <p>James Houghton</p>	 <p>Danny Turner</p>
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It is extremely important to us that the young people and yourselves are involved in this exciting new chapter of the school and we are all looking forward to creating a fantastic “home from home” for our young people.

I hope you find this update informative, if you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards

Mark Rose
Executive Principal
Dawlish Federation of Special Schools