

# Archers Brook SEMH Residential School

**Governing Body of Archers Brook SEMH Residential School and the Council are proposing to permanently close the schools residential provision, at Chester Road, Great Sutton, Ellesmere Port, CH66 2NA. The proposal comes at the request of the governing body who have concluded that it will no longer be capable of operating the residential provision within its delegated budget. The Council agrees with the governing body that the current level of demand presents significant challenges to the long-term sustainability and value for money of the provision.**

**Publication Date: 11 June 2026**

## **School details**

Site: Archers Brook SEMH Residential School

School type: Community special school

Age range: 9-16

Total commissioned places: 116

Needs: Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH)

## **Description of alteration**

Notice is given in accordance with The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, that Cheshire West and Chester Council at the request of the governing body of Archers Brook School intends to make the following prescribed alterations to Archers Brook SEMH Residential School, Chester Road, Great Sutton, Ellesmere Port, CH66 2NA:

- permanently remove the residential provision at Archers Brook School, Ellesmere Port from 1 September 2026

## **Background**

The proposal is a response to the request by the governing body of the school to commence the process of closure of its residential provision as set out in statutory guidance.

The governing body concluded that closure of its residential provision would allow the school to redirect facilities to sustain and enhance its core educational offer. While acknowledging that residential provision is valued by pupils and families, the school highlighted that it has become increasingly unaffordable and heavily reliant on a grant that has not met operational costs for several years. The governing body recognised that any proposal affecting residential provision may be of concern to pupils, families and staff. As such, the school carried out an informal consultation between 28 February and 4 April 2025 seeking views on the proposal and allowing

an opportunity for stakeholders to understand the rationale for the proposal and to share their views before any formal statutory process was considered.

The governing body believes the provision is no longer financially viable within the school's delegated budget, citing:

- Loss of commissioned services funding from the Council in August 2026
- Increasing complexity of pupil needs
- Lack of value for money in maintaining the provision

The school has identified that residential facilities occupy a significant proportion of the site. Some areas have already been repurposed as classrooms, however approximately one quarter of the school's useable building space remains underutilised. Closure would enable more effective use of space to support future growth in day provision. The Council agrees with the governing body that the current level of demand presents significant challenges to the long-term sustainability and value for money of the provision.

Analysis of SEN demand indicates increasing pressure locally and nationally for specialist placements, particularly for pupils with Autism, Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, and Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN).

The Council's strategic priority is to support schools in meeting higher levels of need more cost-effectively while maintaining quality. This aligns with a broader SEND sufficiency review, which forms part of the Local SEND reform plan within which this proposal has been considered.

As part of the wider review of Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision across the borough, the Head of Education and Inclusion, alongside SEND colleagues, has engaged with special schools over several months to consider current and future arrangements relating to residential provision.

It should be noted that this proposal relates solely to the residential provision at Archers Brook School. Educational provision at the school would continue unchanged. The proposal does not affect the school's status as a special school or its ability to meet the needs of pupils through its day provision.

#### **The effect on other schools, academies, and educational institutions within the area**

It is not envisaged that this proposal will impact on other provision in the locality.

#### **Project costs and indication of how these will be met, including how long-term value for money will be achieved:**

Revenue funding for special school places is met from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant, a specific ring-fenced grant, provided by the Department for Education (DfE). The High Needs Block is significantly overspent. Under the

recent SEND Reform announcements, the Council may be eligible for the High Needs Stability Grant, where central government are providing one off additional grant funding to write off a percentage of the accumulated deficit created from this historic overspend, on the condition the Council puts in place plans to achieve best value for money under the current statutory arrangements with an aim to return to an in-year breakeven position in future years.

The annual Extended Day/Residential Grant had historically been allocated across four special schools and this funding arrangement had not been reviewed for a number of years. A recent review identified that the accommodation element of residential provision—being a social care function—has not been appropriately charged. As a result, the funding arrangement operated outside of DfE High Needs funding guidance. Specifically, the High Needs Funding: Operational Guide 2026–2027 (Section 18, paragraph 4) which makes it clear that accommodation costs must not be funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), as these constitute a social care responsibility.

Following its review, in March 2026, the Council approved the cessation of the Extended Day/Residential Grant for special schools in order to comply with DfE funding guidance. This decision was communicated to Archers Brook School and the school governing body confirmed it wished to progress the statutory process for closure of its residential provision.

The residential provision at Archers Brook is defined as overnight stays for pupils as part of an extended educational offer. The school has confirmed that approximately 6.7% of pupils currently access the residential provision. This relatively low level of demand has been considered alongside the financial and operational challenges associated with maintaining the provision.

The Council is responsible for funding home to school transport for eligible children. By removing the residential offer may increase home to school transport costs to the authority if children are eligible for council funded travel to school, as they would then be travelling to and from school on a daily basis. By continuing to pursue our aim to meet children's needs as locally as possible should keep these extra costs to a minimum, by securing more efficient transport.

There may be future opportunities to repurpose residential areas to increase school capacity, subject to feasibility and capital investment from the SEN capital programme.

### **The effect on staff, children and families:**

It is the school's view that pupils meeting residential criteria would be better supported by evaluation for appropriate social care respite provision. Residential provision should meet defined statutory educational needs for pupils where specified in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), rather than providing informal respite

care, which falls under a separate regulatory and funding framework. Children's individual SEND support needs will continue to be assessed through the statutory Education, Health and Care Plan process. Where social care respite support is needed, this will continue to be assessed through the appropriate social care pathways. The Council and school recognise the valuable contribution made by residential staff and acknowledge the uncertainty that proposals of this nature can create. Every effort will be made to support affected employees throughout the process.

The proposed closure has understandably created uncertainty for affected staff. The school have been working with HR colleagues and liaising with unions with regards to any potential redundancy implications..

HR colleagues have supported the process to ensure compliance with employment procedures. The Council has agreed to fund redundancy costs (excluding actuarial pension liabilities which have to be met by the school), as at 31 August 2026. Should there be any delays to the consultation or redundancy dates beyond 31 August 2026, any difference between redundancy costs at 31 August 2026 and the final agreed dates will need to be met by the school. A staff consultation took place between 8 May and 19 June 2025, with a further consultation undertaken on 19 May 2026 to begin a formal restructure, progressed as per the schools adopted redundancy policy and procedure. The consultation includes affected staff, leaders, and engagement with relevant Trade Union representatives. The process will conclude after 4 weeks, with final decisions communicated to staff in July 2026.

All current residential pupils are expected to leave at the end of the current academic year (2025/26). The school has worked with the Council to ensure their needs will continue to be met until departure.

The Council and school have worked together to ensure that no current residential pupil will be left without appropriate support arrangements during the transition period.

### **Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation**

Following the end of the Public Notice period and if approved by the decision-maker (and subject to there being no call-in of the decision or appeal by Chester or Shrewsbury Dioceses to the Schools Adjudicator) the Council and the Governing Body wish to implement the proposal by 31 August 2026..

### **Consultation**

The schools leaders and governing body conducted an informal consultation between 28 February – 4 April 2025 proposing the permanent closure of the school's residential provision with an implementation by August 2026.

The school undertook a comprehensive engagement process, including but not limited to:

- Publication of consultation materials on the school website
- Direct communication with parents/carers and staff
- A stakeholder meeting attended by the Head of Education and Inclusion
- Opportunities to submit feedback via email or post

The school confirmed no objections were raised. Feedback indicated stakeholders understood both the evolving needs of pupils and the funding challenges. The findings were reported to the governing body and the Council. Following confirmation from the Council of the cessation of the Extended Day/Residential Grant in March 2026, the Governing Body reconfirmed its decision to ask the Council to progress the next stage of the statutory decision making process of Formal Consultation and Public Notice on the closure of its residential provision.

### **The procedure for responses: support; objections and comments**

A public notice will be published on the Cheshire West and Chester Council website on 11 June 2026 [Current consultations | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

A public notice announcing the start of a period of public representations is to be published in the Ellesmere Port Pioneer Newspaper on 11 June 2026

Within four weeks from the date of publication (11 June 2026), any person may send in a response supporting, objecting or commenting on the proposal;

- By sending a response to the Senior Manager, Education Infrastructure, Cheshire West and Chester Council, The Portal, Wellington Road, Ellesmere Port, CH65 0BE
- By email to [schoolorganisationandconsultations@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:schoolorganisationandconsultations@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

All responses received will be shared with the decision-maker, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People. Full details of how we manage the information provided by respondents can be found at:

<https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/system-pages/privacy-notices/consultations-privacy-notice.aspx>

**The final date for receipt of representations is Midnight 9 July 2026.**

## Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in audio, Braille, large print or other formats. If you would like information in another format or language, including British Sign Language, please email us at: [equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)

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如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。

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You can also telephone: **0300 123 8 123**

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website: [www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](http://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)