

Greenbank School

The Governing Body of Greenbank School and the Council are proposing to permanently close the schools residential provision, at Greenbank Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 1LD. The proposal comes at the request of the governing body who have concluded, following the end of the Extended Day/Residential Grant Funding that supported the school's extended day / residential provision, that it will not be capable of operating the residential provision within its delegated budget. The Council agrees with the Governing Body and recognises the financial and operational challenges in relation to the long-term sustainability of the provision.

Publication Date: 14 July 2026

School details

Site: Greenbank School

School type: Community special school

Age range: 11-18

Current number of places funded by the Council: 139

Needs: Speech, language and Communication and Autistic Spectrum Condition

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 Greenbank School, intends to make the following prescribed alteration to Greenbank School, Greenbank Lane, Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire, CW8 1LD:

- permanently remove the residential provision at Greenbank School, Northwich 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.

While acknowledging that residential provision is valued by pupils and families, the school recognised following the end of the Extended Day/Residential funding grant that supported the residential provision, it would become increasingly unaffordable to maintain from the schools delegated budget. 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 8 June and 6 July 2026 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 set out the following rationale:

The School and its Governing Board wished to not only maintain the current provision but also re-establish provision to 2013 levels. Following the decision by the Council to discontinue the Extended Day/Residential funding grant, the school considered the feasibility of whether the provision should continue to operate via existing budgets/alternative funding or cease in its entirety.

If the school were to fund only the current residential provision and retain the minimum staffing structure to run and manage residential safely and effectively, by 2027-28 the school budget would be in deficit. A deficit that would progressively worsen in the years afterwards, thereby materially affecting meeting the needs of the main student body. In the absence of any alternative funding streams the school concluded to progress the proposal for closure of the provision from August 2026.

The school's consultation outlined the schools inability to fund the cost of current Extended Day/Residential provision from its own resources. The Council also signposted the school to other funding opportunities. It detailed the closure would mean redundancies for all residential staff. The school curriculum would be reviewed in detail to assess the feasibility of affordably building in elements of the current Extended Day/Residential curriculum that promote life, independent, living, social and communication skills as pupils Prepare for Adulthood within Year 9 to Year 11, 34 pupils (these being pupils who currently have the opportunity to access residential). A small number of these pupils have the requirement of residential provision written into their Education Health and Care Plans and this number will potentially reduce to zero in September 2026 as on-going casework with the families involved progresses. If appropriate, alternative arrangements will be sought for these pupils.

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 remains committed to ensuring that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities receive appropriate support in line with their assessed needs. The proposal relates only to Extended Day/Residential provision and would not affect the school's core educational offer.

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. The school have approached the Council to share an expression of interest in reconfiguring the Extended Day/Residential resources to provide additional educational support to a wider cohort of young people.

It should be noted that this proposal relates solely to the residential provision at Greenbank School. The core 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. Subject to representations and final approval, the proposed closure date is 31 August 2026

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 (DSG), 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.

As part of the wider review of Special Educational Needs 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 the Extended Day/Residential Grant.

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 and changes in the DfE Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) conditions of grant guidance, identified that the accommodation element of residential provision as being a social care function and did not meet the conditions of grant, 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 Greenbank School and the school governing body confirmed it could not sustain the provision from the schools delegated budget and therefore decided to progress the statutory process for closure of its residential provision.

The Council is responsible for funding home-to-school transport for eligible children. Removing the Extended Day/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.

The effect on staff, children and families:

Pupils meeting Extended Day/Residential criteria would require an appropriate social care assessment. Extended Day/Residential provision should meet defined statutory educational needs for pupils where specified in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and supported by appropriate social care assessment 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.

During the informal consultation the school advised that 34 pupils currently access the Extended Day/Residential provision, but this is not a requirement written into all of their EHCP's. A very small number of these pupils have the requirement of residential provision written into their EHCP and this number will potentially reduce to zero in September 2026 as on-going casework with the families involved progresses. If appropriate, alternative arrangements will be sought for these pupils.

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. On 19 May 2026 a consultation meeting was held with Trade Unions followed by a staff consultation meeting with affected staff. A consultation document was issued to all for information and comment.

A staff formal consultation took place between 23 May and 16 June 2026. The consultation included affected staff, leaders, and engagement with relevant Trade Union representatives. The process concluded after 4 weeks. Final decisions will be communicated to staff in August 2026, or as soon as a final decision is made.

Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation

Following the end of the Public Notice period and if approved by the decision-maker - the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (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 8 June – 6 July 2026 proposing the permanent closure of the school's residential provision with an implementation by August 2026.

The school undertook an 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 received 27 responses to the consultation. Feedback indicated stakeholders understood both the evolving needs of pupils and the funding challenges but disagreed with the decision and supported increasing funding and access to previous levels. The findings were reported to the governing body on 8 July 2026. On 9 July 2026, the schools governing body formally confirmed its intention asking the Council to proceed with the closure proposal through the statutory process.

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

- Loss of commissioned services funding (Extended Day/Residential grant) from August 2026
- Significant risk to the school's budget if funded through existing resources

The procedure for responses: support; objections and comments

A public notice will be published on the Cheshire West and Chester Council website on 14 July 2026

[Greenbank School - permanently close the school's residential provision | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

A public notice announcing the start of a period of public representations is to be published in the Northwich & Winsford Guardian. Newspaper on 16 July 2026

Within four weeks from the date of publication (14 July 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

All responses received will be shared with the decision-maker, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People (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. 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 11 August 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**

إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، نرجو أن تطلب ذلك منا.

যদি আপনি এই ডকুমেন্ট অন্য ভাষায় বা ফরমেটে চান, তাহলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে বলুন।

Pokud byste požadovali informace v jiném jazyce nebo formátu, kontaktujte nás

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać.

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਵੋ।

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。

Türkçe bilgi almak istiyorsanız, bize başvurabilirsiniz.

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔

You can also telephone: **0300 123 8 123**
or textphone: **18001 0300 123 8 123**
website: **www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**