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Consultation Findings on Proposed Reduction in High Needs Block Funding for Ash Field Academy's Residential Provision

1.0 Introduction

- 1.01 A Statutory Consultation was carried out by Leicester City Council ("the Council") between 26 September 2022 and 9 January 2023 to seek views on whether the council should cease funding for the residential provision at Ash Field Academy with effect from September 2024.
- 1.02 The consultation was originally intended to close in December 2022, however, further to the Children, Young People and Education Scrutiny Commission on 25 October 2022, it was proposed and agreed the consultation regarding the continuation of High Needs Block funding for Ash Field Academy's Residential be extended to January 9th, 2023. This was to allow a full 12 weeks for respondents to submit their views since the Ash Field Academy Residential Review Report (<https://protect-eu.mimecast.com/s/Be4LC36ONtGRgYrSq2dFr?domain=consultations.leicester.gov.uk>) was published in the public domain. This report included further detailed information regarding the review process, findings and recommendations which may have been of assistance to respondents.
- 1.03 Ash Field Academy provides an Outstanding Residential provision for its pupils and is highly regarded by all who use or are involved in the facility, not least the pupils and their parents/guardians. However, this service is not accessed by all pupils of the academy and is not available to other young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), who aren't pupils of the academy. Annually, approximately 35-45 (22-28%) of Ash Field Academy's circa 160 pupils access the Residential provision.
- 1.04 The Residential provision is currently funded by the High Needs Block grant which the Council receives from the Government as allocated by the Department for Education. The High Needs Block funding is designated by Government to be for the provision of education only and should not be used to fund any non-educational activities, except in exceptional circumstances. Unfortunately, the Residential provision at Ash Field Academy cannot be considered as an exceptional case.
- 1.05 The Council does have a legal duty to provide short breaks / respite support for eligible children and young people with SEND, which is supported through the Council's Disabled Children's Service.

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2.0 Methodology

- 2.01 Email communications were sent out at the start of the consultation to the provision's key stakeholders to advise them of the consultation having opened, its purpose and to provide detail on how to access it online. Additionally, typed correspondence was provided to Ash Field Academy suitable for them to cascade to parents, staff and governors as was requested.
- 2.02 The consultation was available to complete online on the council website at <https://consultations.leicester.gov.uk/sec/ash-field-academy>
- 2.03 Various board/group members and organisations were engaged with, to inform about the consultation. These organisations represent the interests of people who are supported by Ash Field Academy's residential provision:

Group/Organisation Name
Parents/ carers of special school pupils
Ash Field Academy Staff and Parents
Trade Unions
City Mayor / executive
Ward councillors
Special schools (via CLASS - City of Leicester Association of Special Schools)
Parent Carer Forum
Schools Forum
Other stakeholders • SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS) • School Governors
Media (Leicester Mercury)
Leicester City Council Social Care & Education Staff
Leicester City Council staff
Leicester City Residents

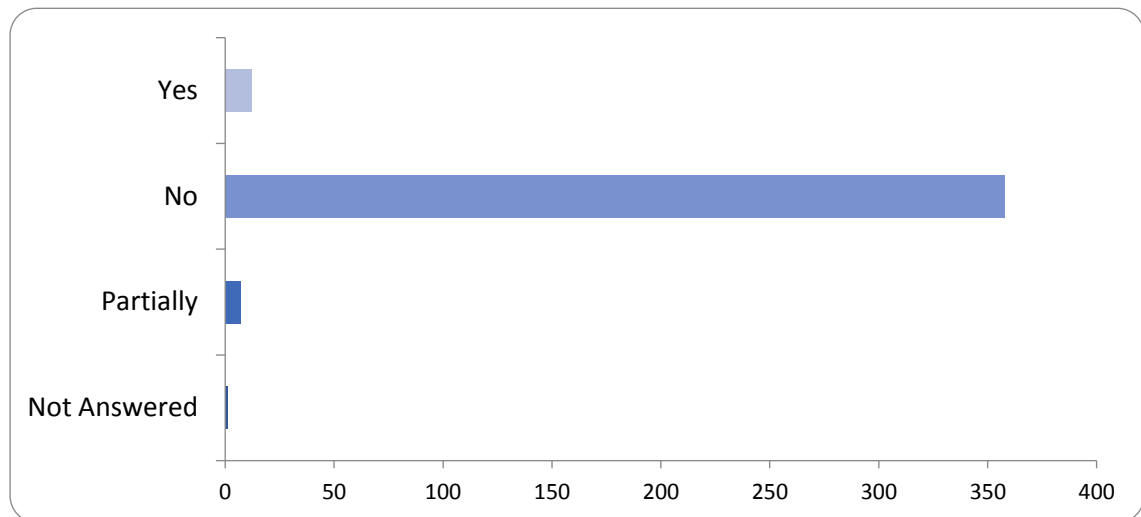
The full stakeholder engagement plan can be found in Appendix 5.

- 2.04 A discussion took place at the schools Forum on 21 September 2022 to present the proposal for the consultation.
- 2.05 Further communications were circulated to stakeholders in light of the consultation end date being extended to 9 January 2023, along with links to the published Ash Field Academy Residential Review Report. Anyone who had already submitted a response ahead of the report being published was able to respond again.
- 2.06 School staff, parents and pupils were met by officers of the Council on 7 December 2022 to discuss the proposals of the consultation. A further meeting was held on 6 January 2023 with Cllr Cutkelvin in attendance too to meet staff, pupils and parents.

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3.0 Consultation Survey Findings

- 3.01 A total of 378 responses were received in response to the consultation survey.
- 3.02 Of these, 94% disagreed with the proposal. 2% partially agreed, 3% agreed and 1% didn't answer.



- 3.03 The majority (29%) of respondents identified themselves as “Other”, or “Local Resident” (21%). 82% of those identifying as “Other” gave a post code beginning “LE” and many stated they were friends or relatives of current/past pupils/staff, had professional links to education/social care, were past members of staff at the academy.

Identifier	Number of Responses	Percentage of responses (%)
Other	108	29
Local resident	79	21
Member of Ash Field Academy school staff or governors	33	9
Member of staff or governor at another school	32	8
Health professional	25	7
Parent of a pupil at Ash Field Academy who uses the school's residential support services	20	5
Parent of a pupil who attends another school	19	5
Pupil at Ash Field Academy who uses the school's residential support services	18	5
Member of Leicester City Council staff	16	4

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Not Answered	12	3
Parent of a pupil at Ash Field Academy who does not use the school's residential support services	7	2
Member of Ash Field Academy residential staff	6	2
Pupil at Ash Field Academy who does not use the school's residential support services	3	1

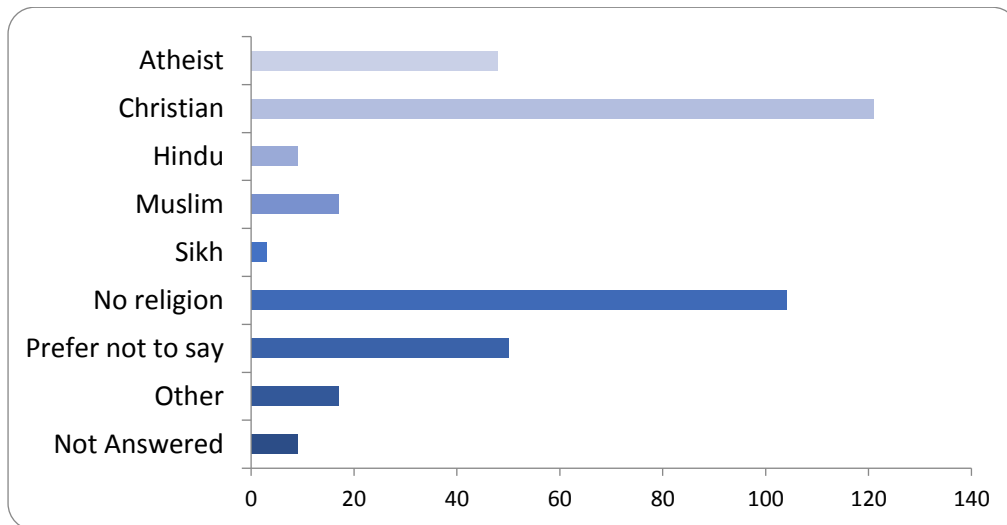
- 3.04 The majority of responses were submitted by people who identified as White British (74%) and some ethnicities were not represented within the responses gathered. This would indicate that the views of people who are not White British are not so well represented. Currently 63% of pupils accessing the residential provision are White British and of the total population of pupils attending the academy, 37% are White British. Less than 50% of Leicester residents identify as White British.

Ethnicity	Total	Percent
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	0	0.00%
Asian or Asian British: Indian	37	9.79%
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	0	0.00%
Asian or Asian British: Any other Asian background	1	0.26%
Black or Black British: African	1	0.26%
Black or Black British: Caribbean	5	1.32%
Black or Black British: Somali	0	0.00%
Black or Black British: Any other Black background	0	0.00%
Chinese	0	0.00%
Chinese: Any other Chinese background	0	0.00%
Dual/Multiple Heritage: White & Asian	2	0.53%
Dual/Multiple Heritage: White & Black African	0	0.00%
Dual/Multiple Heritage: White & Black Caribbean	5	1.32%
Dual/Multiple Heritage: Any other heritage background	3	0.79%
White: British	278	73.54%
White: European	2	0.53%
White: Irish	6	1.59%
White: Any other White background	1	0.26%
Other ethnic group: Gypsy/Romany/Irish Traveller	0	0.00%
Other ethnic group: Any other ethnic group	3	0.79%
Prefer not to say	30	7.94%
Not Answered	4	1.06%

- 3.05 The majority of respondents identified as “Christian” (32%), having “No religion” (27%) or as “Atheist” (13%). Over 45% of the pupils accessing the residential provision are recorded as following no religion. There are slightly more pupils in the school as a whole identifying as Muslim/Islamic. This would

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indicate that the responses received are not proportionally representative of the different religious groups affected by the proposal.



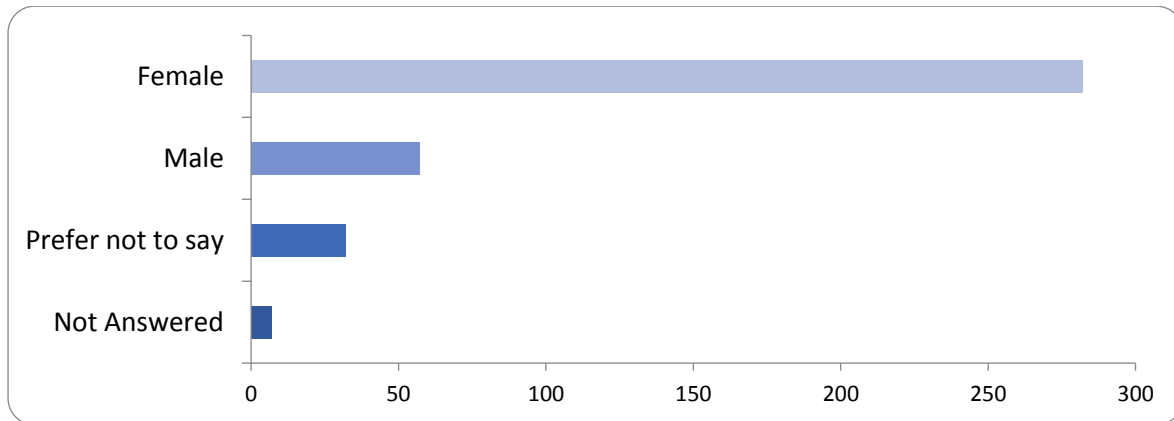
3.06 15% of respondents identified as disabled. Of these, the range of types of disabilities identified are given below and it is evident some respondents identified as having multiple disabilities:

Type of disability	Total	Percent
A long standing illness or health condition such as cancer, HIV, diabetes, chronic heart disease, or epilepsy	16	4.23%
A mental health difficulty, such as depression, schizophrenia or anxiety disorder	25	6.61%
A physical impairment or mobility issues, such as difficulty using your arms or using a wheelchair or crutches	23	6.08%
A social / communication impairment such as a speech and language impairment or Asperger's syndrome / other autistic spectrum disorder	13	3.44%
A specific learning difficulty or disability such as Down's syndrome, dyslexia, dyspraxia or AD(H)D	14	3.70%
Blind or have a visual impairment uncorrected by glasses	5	1.32%
Deaf or have a hearing impairment	5	1.32%
An impairment, health condition or learning difference that is not listed above (specify if you wish)	9	2.38%
Prefer not to say	10	2.65%
Other	7	1.85%
Not Answered	305	80.69%

3.07 75% of respondents identified as female. 60% of respondents said their gender was the same as at birth, 39% did not state whether their gender was the same as at birth or not, 1% said their gender had changed. Approximately

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60% of pupils accessing the residential provision are male, which is proportionally representative of the school as a whole. The views of males are less well represented in the results of this consultation. It was not unexpected to receive a higher proportion of responses from females however given the propensity for females to take on caring responsibilities and given the higher rates of female education staff.



3.08 Most responses were received from working aged adults between 26 and 55 years of age. Thus would indicate that the views of children and young people and those of older people are less well represented.

Age bracket	Total	Percent
under 18	15	3.97%
18 – 25	20	5.29%
26 – 35	70	18.52%
36 – 45	93	24.60%
46 – 55	82	21.69%
56 – 65	54	14.29%
66+	16	4.23%
Prefer not to say	24	6.35%
Not Answered	4	1.06%

3.09 The survey elicited responses from people of various sexual orientation.

Sexual orientation	Total	Percent
Bisexual	12	3.17%
Gay / lesbian	9	2.38%
Heterosexual / straight	286	75.66%
Prefer not to say	53	14.02%
Other (please specify)	14	3.70%
Not Answered	4	1.06%

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- 3.10 87% of respondents included verbatim comment to support their view on the proposal. Comments received were categorised into several recurring themes, as shown below.

Theme of Comments	Percentage of comments reflecting theme (%)
The provision is educational	38.67
The provision provides support/respite	31.47
The provision provides social opportunities	19.2
Non-specific, generally positive about the provision	14.4
No Comment	13.07
It is morally right to offer this provision	11.47
There is no/few alternatives to this provision	11.73
The provision is cost effective in the long term	5.87
Alternative funding should be found	3.47
Concern for staff/risk of redundancies	1.6

- 3.11 Of the 378 responses received, 4 responses appeared to come from just 2 people. In one instance, it appeared the person responding replicated their original response and added more detail to their verbatim comment. In the other instance, it appeared that the same person responded twice but with differing views on whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal. Given the low number of possible duplicate responses (2) in this analysis of 378 responses in total, these will have had little impact on the overall results and therefore no effort has been made to exclude them.