



"Every child deserves the chance to shine at school, and deaf children are no exception."

Proposal to extend age range for Post 16 Education at Heathlands School – (Maintained Hertfordshire CC).

(Following Statutory Guidance for making Prescribed Alterations to Maintained schools - DFE October 2018 -

School and Local Authority details.

Heathlands was established as a Hertfordshire maintained Primary school for deaf children in 1975. When students reached Secondary age, there was no provision locally that could continue providing a curriculum taught using a Total Communication approach. In 1980 Heathlands was encouraged to extend its provision to secondary aged pupils.

All Heathlands teachers hold postgraduate degrees and regularly contribute to research in the field of Deafness, language and literacy development. Heathlands has gone from strength to strength and is now a nationally recognised centre of excellence in deaf education that meets the needs of Deaf students coming from 31 local authorities across the country.

Over the years there has been a decline in the specialist provision available for deaf students. There is no local provision or national provision that meets the needs of Heathlands students post year 11 (age 16-18). Academically able deaf students who have been taught by subject specialist teachers fluent in BSL are placed in mainstream sixth forms or local colleges with no specialist teaching from qualified teachers of the deaf, no access to their native language and socially isolated without a deaf peer group. This often results in high level of deaf learners leaving education early, not achieving their full potential and being unable to secure promising jobs that they are capable of.

Evidence of Need

There is clear evidence of need; parents, pupils and local authorities have requested Heathlands provision up to the age of 18 for many years. Parents, carers and Local Authorities considering Heathlands expect continuity of provision after Year 11. Hertfordshire deaf pupils are not having their needs met or are funded out of county where their needs are still not fully met.

Heathlands is therefore proposing to offer learning until the age of 18 / Year 13 to those who are following an academic A Level pathway which will meet the needs of learners who learn using sign language, so that they can succeed academically and have the support for social and emotional development.

- On-site specialist course delivery.
- Joint and collaborative delivery with the local schools consortium supported by Heathlands.
- A full 25 hours learning programme not part time programmes offered by many colleges
- A full pastoral support plan in place.
- Support in future transitions to adulthood.
- Opportunities for other educational providers to benefit from BSL
- Students to benefit from different paced lessons and increased pastoral support.

Target Market

Deaf students 16-19 who use BSL as their main mode of communication or need sign support to access the curriculum and to maximise learning.

Students who are already pupils at Heathlands for their secondary education and working towards GCSE grades 5-9.

Students will be drawn from the same geographical area as the school currently serves, generally North London Boroughs, the South and East of England. A review of the commissioning of other specialist 16-19 providers for deaf children would suggest there are a range of LAs currently paying for more expensive placements when students could be educated nearer their home communities and still have their needs fully met at Heathlands.

Objectives (how the proposal will increase educational standards and parental choice.

- EHC Plans now cover the 0-25 age range.
- Hertfordshire LA have made clear their intention to reduce the number of out county placements at post 16 level and the desire to “build capacity” within Herts. This proposal fits with the DSPL strategy.
- To provide equality for Deaf signing students to have provision that meets their needs and delivered in their native language until they reach the age of 18.
- Heathlands has a reputation of Outstanding practice to build on and is a recognised regional centre of excellence for Deaf education which serves many other LAs which are similarly looking to educate as close to home as possible.
- Within Hertfordshire there is another specialist school for deaf children (using a different communication mode) offering post 16 provision. Collaborative working could lead to effective practice and economies of scale. There are also issues of the equity of provision with signing deaf learners having less choice than either their mainstream or orally educated peers.
- There is now the expectation that students continue with Maths and English until they achieve level 2 or equivalent. For Heathlands students this will be most effective if taught directly by subject specialist Teachers of the Deaf fluent in BSL.

Statistics on Deaf Learners

- Research undertaken by Manchester University (“Deaf Young People in Further Education” published January 2015) highlights concerns about the provision and outcomes for deaf students in FE.
- Over the past 10 years several specialist providers of education for deaf students, including post 16 providers have closed. This has resulted in a significant drop in the specialist provision available for Deaf students nationally.
- DfE 2018 exam results showed that just 44% of all deaf pupils achieve two A-levels or equivalent, compared to 63% of hearing pupils.
- The National Deaf Children’s Society says that the problem affects deaf children throughout their education, as they arrive at secondary school having already fallen behind. Less than half (43%) reach the expected standard for reading, writing and maths at Key Stage 2, compared to three quarters (74%) of other children
- As an existing regional specialist centre Heathlands would be able to retain appropriate peer group numbers to run A Level teaching groups this will be both cost effective and lead to improved outcomes for deaf learners.
- Heathlands’ proposal is to work in collaboration with the local schools sixth form consortium.

- Costs – at school level very good value for money in comparison with other similar providers whilst having strong value added measures.

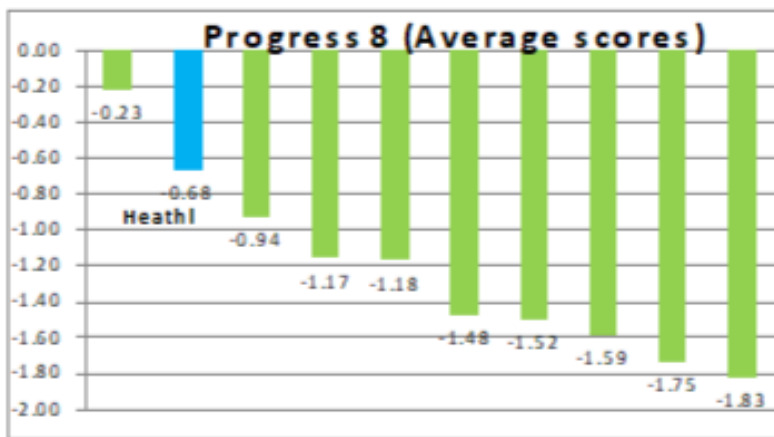
Benchmarking

There have been no National comparative performance figures available for examination outcomes for 2020 and 2021 as written examinations did not take place due to Covid restrictions. As a result, final examination grades were derived from teacher assessment with no performance data published.

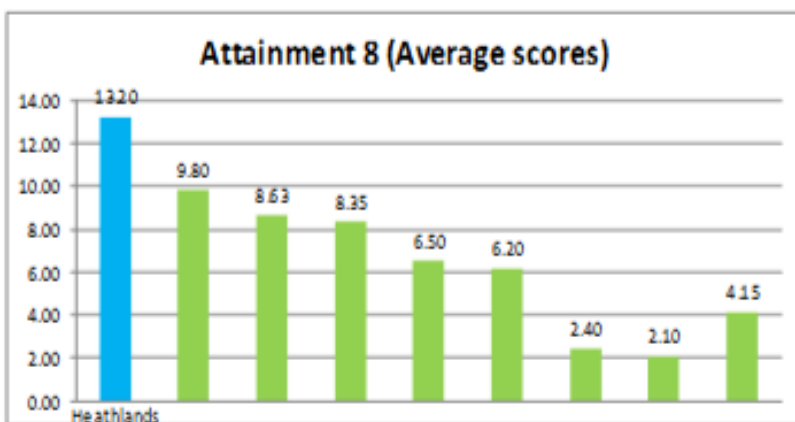
However, using the last four years of available national data, and an ‘average’ progress 8 score, Heathlands School has consistently achieved the **second highest progress score** of **all** schools for deaf children and **the highest average attainment** score of all schools for deaf children that use sign language

Heathlands is established as an outstanding provider for education of 3-16 year olds. This is evidenced in value added table summarising value added and per pupil spend in comparison to other specialist providers. Provisional comparison data on Gov.uk website shows Heathlands to have the 11th highest Progress 8 score of 1439 special schools nationally. Heathlands’ per pupil spend is significantly below most other maintained schools for Deaf children whilst achieving consistently high value added scores, this good practice can be extended into 16-19 education.

It is also noteworthy that Heathlands has achieved such Attainment and Progress scores despite having one of the **lowest per pupil incomes** of schools for deaf children nationally, indicating outstanding ‘value for money’.



Schools for Deaf children	4 year average Progress 8
Mary Hare	-0.23
Heathlands	-0.68
RSD Derby	-0.94
Knightsfield	-1.17
Hamilton Lodge	-1.18
Braidwood	-1.48
Exeter	-1.52
Blanche Neville	-1.59
St Johns	-1.75
Oak Lodge	-1.83



Total income



Implementation Plan and Curriculum Offer

Central to Heathlands' ethos is the principle that learners have provision that meets their needs and is right for them. Heathlands is a growing school and expects year on year to review its curriculum offer to meet the aspirations of pupils on roll. The courses and curriculum on offer must match students' needs and ensure progression.

A full 25 learning hours will be offered to all students following an A Level pathway.

The Projection of expected staffing requirements from Sept.2024 (see below) shows that Heathlands has the teaching team capacity and skills to deliver appropriate student focused courses at A Level.

- Level 2 courses as a direct progression from level 1 for young people who have already achieved a range of lower grade GCSEs / level one subjects
- Teaching of Maths and English up to Level 2, GCSE or key skills, by Qualified Teachers of the Deaf
- A Levels delivered by Heathlands with some in collaboration with the local schools consortium if required.

Currently there are no Schools/Colleges offering 'A' Levels taught directly in sign language by subject specialists who are qualified teachers of the deaf (QToDs). It would be unrealistic to offer a full range of 'A' levels but most core A levels will be delivered by Heathlands staff and to ensure there is a breadth of course provision we have secured the agreement of the local schools consortium.

- This will be attractive to other LAs looking for post 16 placement
- Continuity of provision and aspirations would be attractive to students and parents
- With careful timetabling core 'A' levels e.g. English and maths could be combined with mainstream options
- The possibility of teaching 'A' level would help recruit staff.
- Reduction in the number of students dropping out of education or underachieving at post 16.

The following excel sheet shows how an extension into Year 12 to provide A level courses in 7 or 8 subjects could be met from the current Heathlands Secondary staffing.

From September 2025 when students would move into Year 13 and a new cohort into Year 12, there would be required an additional one FTE teacher. (or two if the Year 7 intake in Sept. 2025 were two classes).

- **Capacity**

The proposal of extending the age range at Heathlands would not impact on the sufficiency of existing places/capacity. Numbers at Heathlands have grown rapidly in the past three years which the school has met. Heathlands has teaching staff and current building plans ensures capacity of increased number N-11 as well as a small A-Level cohort from September 2024.

- **Capital**

The provision of A Levels at Heathlands has no capital implications on HCC. Current building plans for additional classrooms are funded by the school's capital budget. There will be no Post 16 residential places initially. Heathlands plans to fundraise for a Post 16 residential provision within 5 years.

- **Costings**

The costings for A Level places would work on the same basis as N-11 funding; each student would be funded at base rate per place plus top up.

- **Cohort**

The A Level cohort at Heathlands will be smaller in number as not all of the current cohorts will be able to take A Levels. As shown in the spreadsheet entitled Sept 2024 14.2 FTE – Expected staffing and timetabled hours available, the proposed 6th form plan is sustainable over future years. There

are no additional teachers required to run a timetable to include year 12 teaching. Therefore, there would be no increase in the number of teachers on permanent contracts for September 2024. In September 2025 there are currently no students within the current year 9 cohort who would benefit from such provision and therefore the likelihood is that there would not need to be an increase in September 2025. In September 2026 (current Year 8) there are some students who would benefit and would enter year 12 as the September 2024 cohort were leaving so again no expected increase in teaching staff on permanent contracts. In September 2027 should there be a second cohort suitable to commence a year 12 programme, calculations show that a minimum of four students would provide sufficient income to fund an additional teacher.

- **Consortium**

In order to enable a breadth of offer, Heathlands would work with the local schools consortium at Post 16. Core subjects i.e. sciences, english, maths, humanities can be taught at Heathlands. Subjects not on offer at Heathlands can be accessed via the consortium i.e. photography. Communication support would be provided by Heathlands as well as follow up lessons with a QToD. In return, Heathlands can offer the learning of BSL to our consortium school students as an enrichment subject.

- **HCC**

As a maintained school, Hertfordshire County Council would remain the admitting authority for places at Heathlands for KS5.

Mental Health factors and young deaf people

There is a lack of reliable government data on the prevalence of mental health problems in deaf children in UK. Historical data, cited in government research, suggests that over 40% of deaf children experience mental health problems compared to over 25% of hearing children.

The National Deaf Children's Society believes that deaf children experience a higher risk of psychological, behavioural and emotional problems. However, deafness in itself is not a risk factor for increased mental health difficulties: it is the consequence of being deaf in a hearing-orientated world where the ability to hear is considered a necessity to function in everyday life; particularly in terms of communication.

Environmental factors associated with deafness contribute to the increased risk of mental health difficulties for deaf children and young people. The most common factors are the lack of access to language and communication, fewer opportunities for deaf children to meet deaf peers, isolation within mainstream settings, lack of support to understand their own deaf identity, bullying, discrimination and a general lack of knowledge of deafness within society.

These environmental factors have a significant impact on deaf children and mean that frequently they experience unfamiliar language and communication structures, reduced opportunities for fluent two-way interaction, limited access to incidental learning, a partial understanding of what is happening around them and difficulties in forming and maintaining relationships with others, including within their family. These difficulties can be compounded for deaf children with further complex needs.

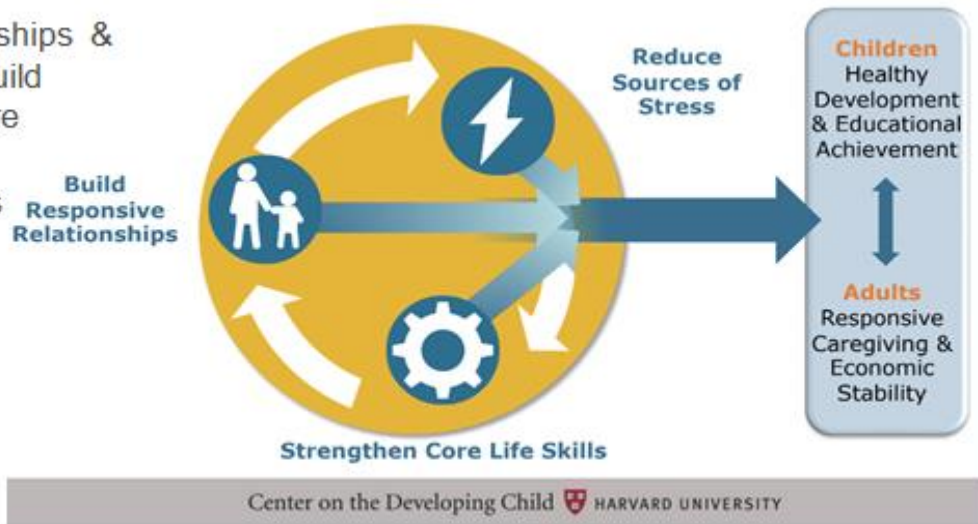
Taken from: National Deaf Childrens Society. *Emotional well-being and mental health of deaf children and young people position statement. 2017*

'The transition between phases of education is a risk-point for vulnerable learners. Schools need to diagnose pupils' needs as soon as possible in order to put in place effective support to help those falling behind to catch up.'

1. Responsive relationships & positive experiences build sturdy brain architecture

2. Toxic stress disrupts the development of brain architecture & other systems

3. Core capabilities for school, work and life are built over time



Ellie Monk left Heathlands in Year 11 in 2008 and returned with the agreement of the Local Authority to study A levels at Heathlands in 2009, when her post 16 placement had broken down. She returned alongside two other year 12 students whose placements had also broken down. All three achieved good A levels and went onto university.

When it was time for me to choose a placement to do my A Levels, I was disheartened to find that options were limited. I was taught in a school where I was surrounded by deaf peers, qualified teachers of the deaf and British Sign Language. I had two options: to attend a local college with supports from CSWs or to go to a specialised school but be taught orally. I decided to go to an oral establishment mainly because there are qualified teachers of the deaf and a large peer group which I would not find in a mainstream college. Going from a total communication establishment where I could both sign and speak to a place where I was fully educated orally, I struggled. Due to the fact I took a long time to adjust to oral education, my performance and achievements were impacted. I went from an 'A' at GCSE at Heathlands to a 'D' at A level. I actually received an 'A' for an unseen paper and a 'F' on a paper which was taught in the classroom which says a lot about the information I was missing. My confidence was lost. I wasn't sure if I would manage to do English at university.

Fortunately, I got in university to study English Literature and during my degree, I felt that I really thrived; my confidence grew. I was supported fully via fully qualified BSL interpreter. Accessing for information wasn't a struggle anymore. I could finally just focus on my learning, instead of straining to understand what is happening in the classroom. I graduated with a First Class English Lit degree and decided to do my Masters.

Ellie Monk.
Heathlands 2010
Now qualified teacher of the Deaf.

Courtney Gurney (ex pupil) left Heathlands in Year 11 in 2014.

I am currently in University studying law; I had completed 4 years in college (I quit college in my third year due to poor level of communication support worker / tutors had lack of deaf awareness) and it was not without struggle. I battled with loneliness; I did not have any deaf peers with whom I could talk to except countless hearing peers who would turn their nose up at me and refused to work with me. I had many communication support workers ranging from level 1 to 4 but this was not enough for my course where there are many legal jargons and they were not able to convey the information in depth and as a result I missed out on key information and details. Additionally, I was unable to reach out for assistance; I had to put in extra effort in order to keep up with my hearing peers. I felt extremely disorientated, isolated and I became more dependent on people around me. It was then that I realised it was a culture shock that I was experiencing only a few days into college.

It was extremely tough leaving Heathlands School as it was where I grew into the person I am today; I developed my strong deaf identity because of the medium I was taught in (British Sign Language) and I had deaf peers from whom I could learn from too. Together, it enriched my education and allowed me to accomplish the best of my abilities.

Courtney Gurney.
Heathlands 2014
Currently studying law at Bristol University

Claire Gamon
Hertfordshire County Lead Practitioner (HI) and Educational Audiologist

"Heleema was a late cochlear implantee. She was at Heathlands then transferred to Maple once her oral auditory skills had improved. She then moved to Knightsfield for her secondary education. Heleema is doing a placement-based course at Watford Regional College. Knightsfield could not cover her support, due to the geography, so SENDSAS HI have taken over her support.

Her comment: "I have done since I was leaving year 11 was hard work and I have to revise for exam"...is very telling... she clearly continues to have difficulties expressing herself in English and her 'hard work' since moving to college, presumably to gain a GCSE in English, is being carried out without daily support from a Teacher of the Deaf who understands her needs (and, I assume, is indicated as one of her provisions on her EHCP).

If she lived closer to Knightsfield, she would receive, from Knightsfield, note taker support in college and additional core subject support within Knightsfield.

This raises the question as to whether Knightsfield and Heathlands could work collaboratively to support the integration of HCC students into mainstream colleges local to where they live, and send out support workers (note takers and BSL communicators - depending on need) from Heathlands and Knightsfield) plus provide an offer from a local Deaf support unit where the students developed language, communication and core literacy and numeracy skills. The units would be: West Herts Heathlands and East/North Herts Knightsfield.

Consultation

As part of the proposal to extend the age range to 18, Heathlands is undertaking a formal consultation involving parents, students, local authorities, other colleges and schools for deaf children and the wider deaf community and national organisations.

They will be asked to indicate their support or objection to the proposal and the reason(s) behind their choice.

Consultation Starts MONDAY 5th December 2022

Closing Date for Consultation Responses MONDAY 16th January 2023

Proposed Implementation SEPTEMBER 2024