

## **Consultation on the proposed establishment of a Specialist Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Unit at Northampton International Academy for children and young people with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health needs.**

### **Introduction**

The corporate plan for West Northamptonshire: “One West Northamptonshire Plan” includes the priority, by 2030, to:

*“Have access to good quality specialist education provision for our Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) children built on inclusive mainstream school environments and effective alternative provision”*

This will be achieved by establishing “*additional special educational needs and disability resource provision/units within existing schools*” to offer inclusive education that raises aspiration and meets the needs of West Northamptonshire’s growing population of children, families, and young people.

West Northamptonshire’s SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy (2023 – 2026) emphasises that all children and young people thrive and achieve through inclusive, high-quality education provision. The plan also highlights the priority regarding continuation to grow the number of specialist units attached to mainstream schools in line with the growing demand for SEND places, with an additional priority to work in partnership with families and external health and care practitioners. Both features are committed to improved outcomes for all children and young people with SEND.

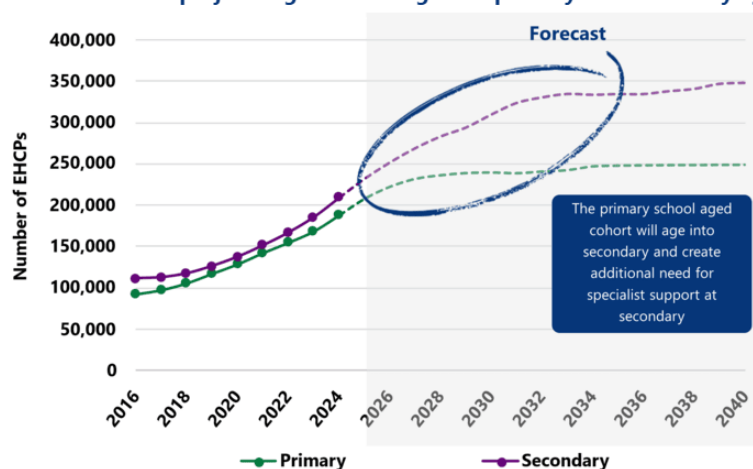
The Department for Education’s “*Every Child Achieving and Thriving*” (February 2026) White Paper, highlighted that the government would be creating 60,000 new specialist places and inclusion bases for SEND pupils within mainstream schools nationally.

A new SEND Unit for children and young people aged 11 to 16 with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), Anxiety, and/or with an Autistic Spectrum Condition diagnosis, or on the pathway to diagnosis, located at Northampton International Academy (NIA), will meet key objectives from both West Northamptonshire and the Department for Education’s strategic plans.

## Rational for the SEND Unit at Northampton International Academy

West Northamptonshire Council's SEND projections reflect that the local authority expects the number of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in the locality to increase in the next four years, especially in Social, Emotional, and Mental Health presentations. This is in line with projected growth nationally, especially in the secondary age group, where the greatest need for additional support is likely to be required.

Figure 6 – Historic and projected growth in England's primary and secondary age EHCP cohorts



There are currently fourteen schools with SEND Units across West Northamptonshire. Only one at secondary level has a specialist SEMH provision which provides capacity for 10 young people.

Primary Schools (10 SEND Units)	Secondary Schools (4 SEND Units)
Communication and Interaction Total SEND Units= <b>6</b> Total Places = <b>229</b>	Communication and Interaction Total SEND Units= <b>2</b> Total Places = <b>40</b>
Cognition and Learning Total SEND Units = <b>2</b> Total Places = <b>70</b>	Cognition and Learning Total SEND Units = <b>0</b> Total Places = <b>0</b>
Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Total SEND Units = <b>1</b> Total Places = <b>16</b>	Social, Emotional, and Mental Health Total SEND Units = <b>1</b> Total Places = <b>10</b>
Sensory and Physical Total SEND Units = <b>1</b> Total Places = <b>5</b>	Sensory and Physical Total SEND Units = <b>1</b> Total Places = <b>11</b>

Given the increasing numbers of young people in the locality presenting with SEMH, there is a need for additional secondary SEND Units to support

individuals within a mainstream setting. The creation of this local specialist provision will not only support rising needs, but crucially will reduce demand

to place secondary pupils outside of West Northamptonshire, therefore reducing fiscal costs with out of area placements and facilitating young people attending a specialist provision in the NN1 locality.

## The Proposal

Northampton International Academy (NIA) is proposing to open a SEND Unit in September 2026 for up to 30 children and young people (CYP), who are aged between 11 and 16 years of age, and have an EHCP which names Social, Emotional, and Mental Health at the primary area of need.

NIA is an all through (ages 4 to 18) sponsored Free School which was inspected by Ofsted in October 2024. His Majesty's Inspectors rated the academy "Good" in five areas out of six. NIA has a capacity admission number of 2220 children and young people.

The CYP profile of the SEND Unit will be for individuals who present with Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA), Anxiety, and/or Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) or are on the pathway to diagnosis.

Placement at NIA's SEND Unit will offer CYP a clinically informed tailored educational package based on the national curriculum with an accompanying strong preparation for adulthood offer so that CYP can access their locality, be supported to be independent, and live well. This tailored offer will thoroughly prepare CYP to make academic and social progress from individual starting points.

By using the graduated approach at all levels, and applying early intervention, NIA's SEND Unit will be populated by specialist staff who will work in partnership with CYP, parents/carers, and health and care practitioners through East Midlands Academy Trust's (EMAT) unique Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Educational Psychologists, Highly Qualified Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, and a positive behaviour management company. NIA also employs two counsellors who will be part of the extended staff team.

The aim of the SEND Unit is for CYP to progress to their local provision of choice (eg – a school, college, or specialist setting, an apprenticeship, traineeship, supported internship, or a study programme) whilst being supported through a preparation for adulthood offer.

EMAT are committed to realising their vision of "*every child deserving to be the best they can*" by ensuring that the proposed NIA SEND Units meets the needs of West Northamptonshire's current and future children and young people (CYP).

CYP who attend the SEND Unit at NIA will benefit from the additional support and clinically informed learning opportunities made available to them while spending the majority of their



time in within the SEND Unit. Individuals will benefit from the opportunities that being part of the extended offer of mainstream academy within the pupils' local community offers.

The establishment of a SEND Unit at NIA will build on the educational offer already being delivered at NIA and will further enhance the academic and social offer the academy provides to the community.

### **What will be the impact of the proposed SEND Unit for students already attending NIA?**

It is not envisaged that the proposed SEND Unit will impact negatively on other students in the academy. This is because additional space in the academy has already been identified to locate the SEND Unit. The proposed SEND Unit would be self-contained, and located inside the academy, but with its own entrance and accessibility.

The additional 30 places would further enhance the educational offer the academy is able to provide in a clinically informed inclusive environment, while meeting needs of its community. It will create a further opportunity to continue with the progress the school is making with SEND pupils, strengthen the existing approach used in identifying pupils' needs and more training for staff working with pupils with learning needs.

### **Admissions**

Admissions to the proposed SEND Unit will follow a different procedure from that operating for the rest of the academy. Admissions into the SEND Unit will be through West Northamptonshire Council's SEND EHC panel process via EHCP consults. This will not impact pupils who are in the mainstream setting at the academy.

Pupils attending the SEND Unit would be in addition to the mainstream Planned Admission Number. There would be 30 planned places in the SEND Unit.

### **Funding**

For each placement in the SEND Unit, NIA will receive funding from West Northamptonshire Council via the Department for Education (DfE) High Need Block. This is in the form of high-needs funding via the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) which is for SEND Units and resourced provision in schools. Funding includes core place funding and top-up funding.

## Location and Facilities

The SEND Unit will be situated within the existing building at NIA but crucially will have its own dedicated area and entrance at the side of the academy so that CYP will be able to access the provision without going into the main school. Accessibility is a key component of the design of the proposed SEND Unit with funding having been allocated with the proposal to install three therapeutic classrooms, an immersion room, a consultation room (for therapeutic practitioners) alongside an adaptive technology package to support teaching and learning.

## What Happens Next?

This consultation is an opportunity for interested parties and stakeholders to express views and ask questions on the proposal of establishing a SEND Unit for CYP with EBSA, Anxiety, and/or ASC (or on the pathway to diagnosis) at NIA.

The consultation period is open now and will close on **Friday 12th June at 5pm**.

NIA is part of East Midlands Academy Trust, so will have to follow the Department for Education's statutory process for making significant changes to an academy as the local authority (West Northamptonshire Council) is not the decision maker for organisational changes to academies. The final decision as to whether this proposal is approved for implementation will be made by the Department for Education.

The process for making significant changes to academies can be viewed in detail here:

[Making significant changes to an academy](#) (February 2026)

Key Milestones	Date
Consultation Period	<b>15<sup>th</sup> May 2026 to 12<sup>th</sup> June 2026</b>
Submission of significant changes to an academy: Tier 1 application form to the DfE	<b>By 15<sup>th</sup> June 2026</b>
Decision	<b>By 30<sup>th</sup> June 2026</b>
Implementation	<b>1<sup>st</sup> September 2026</b>

## Have your Say

You can state whether you support this proposal or not by completing the consultation questionnaire via the following link:

You can give your views in the following ways:

- Online: click [here](#) to complete our short questionnaire
- Write to: Veris consultation, East Midlands Academy Trust Pyramus House Roman Way Grange Park Northampton NN4 5EA
- Email: [consultation@emat.uk](mailto:consultation@emat.uk)

If you have any other questions regarding this proposal, please email [consultation@emat.uk](mailto:consultation@emat.uk)