

Educational and Operational Justification for Proposed External Classrooms and MUGA

Courtlands Independent Special School is seeking permission to install a small number of external wooden lodge-style classrooms within the existing school grounds, together with a modest enclosed multi-use games area (MUGA) to support pupils during wet weather.

The proposed wooden lodges would be used for therapeutic provision, including counselling, therapy sessions, and a small fitness suite, an outside gym area and regulation space. These facilities are integral to the school's specialist provision and directly support pupils with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), the majority of whom present with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and associated needs such as anxiety, sensory regulation difficulties, and communication challenges.

Educational Need and Rationale

The current school building, while suitable for core teaching, has limited capacity to provide the quiet, calm, low-arousal spaces that are essential for pupils with neurodiverse profiles. For many pupils, access to smaller, quieter environments away from the main building is not a preference but a necessity in order to regulate, engage with learning, and access therapeutic support safely and effectively.

The introduction of external teaching and therapy spaces would:

- reduce pressure on the main school building;
- allow pupils access to calm, purpose-designed environments;
- improve emotional regulation and readiness to learn;
- support therapeutic interventions that are already specified within pupils' EHCPs.
- Allow space for parental consultations in a quiet sensitive environment

This "breathing space" within the school site is a critical part of meeting pupils' needs and aligns with best practice in specialist education. Transitioning children who have been out of school, in some incidences for over 12 months needs calm quiet environments to support them as they build their resilience.

Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA)

The proposed small enclosed MUGA is intended primarily to provide a safe space for structured play and movement during periods of poor weather. At present, the school has no suitable covered or enclosed outdoor provision, which significantly limits pupils' access to physical activity during wet conditions.

For pupils with ASC and anxiety, regular movement and predictable physical activity are essential for regulation and wellbeing. The MUGA would:

- reduce pressure on internal spaces during breaks;
- provide structured, supervised activity;
- support pupils' physical and emotional health.



Heritage Considerations

The school recognises the importance of the Grade II listed building on site and has carefully considered the impact of the proposals. The lodges are designed as low-profile, timber structures that sit within the existing school grounds and are visually subordinate to the main building. They do not require alteration to the listed structure itself and are reversible in nature.

The proposals have been developed to ensure that the setting and significance of the listed building are respected, while allowing the school to function effectively as a modern specialist educational provision.

Transport Impact Statement

Introduction

This statement has been prepared in support of the proposed development at Courtlands Independent Special School and considers the potential transport and traffic implications arising from the proposals.

Existing Travel Patterns

Courtlands Independent Special School serves a small specialist pupil cohort. The majority of pupils arrive at and leave the site via parental drop-off or local authority-commissioned taxi transport. Arrival and departure times are highly structured and occur within clearly defined windows.

- Monday - Friday
- Morning drop-off: approximately **8.30am**
- Afternoon collection: approximately **3.30pm**

These times fall outside peak commuter traffic periods and are already well-established.

- 60% local authority taxis and multi car share
- 30% parents
- 10% foot or cycle

Impact of Proposed Development

The proposed development will not result in a significant increase in pupil numbers beyond those already planned and approved. As a result, there will be no material increase in the number of individual vehicle movements associated with the school.

Any small increase in numbers would be absorbed within existing transport arrangements and is not expected to generate additional peak-time traffic beyond current levels.



On-Site Parking and Circulation

The school site has sufficient space within its grounds to accommodate vehicle drop-off and pick-up activity. This allows vehicles to enter, manoeuvre, and exit the site safely without overspill onto surrounding residential streets.

This on-site capacity significantly reduces the potential for congestion or parking pressure in the local area.

Daytime Vehicle Movements

Vehicle movements during the school day are minimal. Pupils remain on site for the duration of the school day, and there is no routine requirement for off-site travel.

The school operates a single minibus, which is used on an occasional basis for planned school trips. These trips are infrequent and do not generate regular traffic movements.

Conclusion

Given the specialist nature of the provision, the limited pupil numbers, the structured arrival and departure times, and the availability of on-site space for vehicles, the proposed development is expected to have negligible impact on local traffic conditions.

The proposals will not give rise to unacceptable transport or highway impacts and are considered appropriate in this context.

Local Authority Support and Demand

The local authority fully supports the school and its proposed development. Courtlands Independent Special School operates at capacity and currently has a waiting list for pupils seeking places, particularly for the September Year 6/7 transition. This reflects a clear and growing local need for specialist provision of this type.

The proposed development will allow a small increase in pupil numbers beyond those already approved as we grow to full capacity catering for years 7 – 11, these proposed changes will significantly enhance the school's ability to meet the needs of its existing and future pupils in an appropriate, lawful, and humane way.

Conclusion

The proposed external classrooms and MUGA are essential to the effective delivery of specialist education at Courtlands Independent Special School. They represent a proportionate, sensitive response to the needs of pupils with EHCPs, balance educational necessity with heritage considerations, and are strongly supported by the local authority.

Approval of this application will enable the school to continue to meet its statutory responsibilities while preserving the integrity of the listed building and its setting.



Courtlands Independent Special School – Planning Fact Sheet

Type of Provision

Independent Special School

Pupil Numbers

- Total number of pupils on roll: 23 rising to 80
- All pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP): 100%

Primary Needs Profile (Modal Split)

- Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC): **75%**
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): **20%**
- Communication Disorder: **5%**

(Some pupils present with overlapping needs; figures reflect primary presenting needs as identified in EHCPs.)

School Structure

- Number of year groups: 4 rising to 5
- Number of classes: 8 rising to 10
- Small class sizes, appropriate to a specialist setting

School Year

- Number of teaching weeks per year: **36**

School Day

- Start time: **8.30am**
- Finish time: **3.30pm**

Operational Context

- The school provides specialist education for pupils whose needs cannot be met in mainstream settings.
- Provision is designed to support pupils with ASC and associated needs, within a structured, low-arousal environment.
- Staffing ratios and timetabling reflect the specialist nature of the provision.