

Educational and Operational Justification for Proposed External Classrooms, Retention of Existing Buildings and MUGA

Courtlands Independent Special School

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 periods of poor weather.

The proposed wooden lodges would be used for therapeutic provision, including counselling, therapy sessions, regulation activities, a small fitness suite, outdoor gym provision and wellbeing support. 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 already specified within pupils' EHCPs.
- Provide space for parental consultations in a quiet and 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 cases for over twelve months, requires calm and nurturing environments that support resilience and successful reintegration into education.

Justification for Maintaining Use of the Large Shed / Lodge

The existing shed/lodge forms an important part of the educational provision at Courtlands Independent Special School and supports the school's specialist approach to teaching and learning for pupils with additional needs.

The building provides a flexible learning environment that complements the main school accommodation and allows pupils to access educational opportunities in a smaller, less formal setting.

The space is used for a variety of curriculum and therapeutic purposes, including:

- Design and Technology activities and practical project work.
- Art and creative activities.
- Small group teaching and intervention sessions.
- Outdoor learning programmes.
- Environmental and nature-based education.
- Wellbeing, nurture and therapeutic support activities.
- Individual mentoring and pastoral support.
- Sensory and reflective learning opportunities.

The location of the building enables pupils to learn in close proximity to the natural environment, supporting the school's commitment to outdoor education, wellbeing and experiential learning.

Access to a separate learning space is particularly beneficial for pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), providing opportunities for reduced stimulation, focused intervention work and improved engagement.

Retaining the shed/lodge also allows the school to deliver elements of the curriculum that are not always suitable within a traditional classroom environment. The facility supports practical skills development, creativity, independence, confidence building and emotional regulation.

The building does not generate additional traffic, parking demand, noise or disturbance beyond that already associated with the established educational use of the site. Its continued use therefore represents a sustainable and valuable educational resource that directly contributes to the school's specialist provision and the wellbeing and development of its pupils.

For these reasons, the continued educational use of the shed/lodge is considered necessary, appropriate and beneficial to the operation of Courtlands Independent Special School.

Retention of Existing Storage Sheds

The school also proposes to retain the small storage sheds located to the west of the site.

These structures provide essential storage for educational resources, outdoor learning equipment, sports equipment, maintenance materials, site management equipment and seasonal resources used throughout the school year.

Retaining these facilities ensures that equipment can be stored safely, securely and appropriately, reducing clutter within teaching spaces and supporting the effective day-to-day operation of the school.

The sheds are modest in scale, have no adverse impact on neighbouring properties and form an important part of the school's operational infrastructure. Their continued retention

supports both the educational and practical functioning of the site and avoids the need for additional storage provision elsewhere on the grounds.

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 and supervised activity.
- Support pupils' physical and emotional health.
- Improve opportunities for physical education and social development throughout the year.

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 remain 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 whilst 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 transport.

Arrival and departure times are highly structured and occur within clearly defined windows:

- Monday to Friday
- Morning arrival: approximately 8.30am
- Afternoon departure: approximately 3.30pm

Travel arrangements currently comprise:

- 60% Local Authority taxis and shared transport.
- 30% parental transport.
- 10% walking or cycling.

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 vehicle movements associated with the school.

Any future increase in pupil numbers will 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 collection activity.

This allows vehicles to enter, manoeuvre and exit the site safely without overspill onto surrounding residential streets.

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 occasionally for planned educational visits and activities.

Conclusion

Given the specialist nature of the provision, the limited pupil numbers, structured arrival and departure times and availability of on-site parking and circulation space, 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.

Local Authority Support and Demand

The Local Authority fully supports the school and its proposed development.

Courtlands Independent Special School currently operates at capacity and maintains a waiting list, particularly for Year 6 to Year 7 transition placements.

This reflects a clear and growing demand for specialist provision of this type.

The proposed development will allow the school to continue growing towards its approved capacity while significantly enhancing the quality of provision available to existing and future pupils.

School Profile

Type of Provision

Independent Special School

Pupil Numbers

- Current roll: 58 pupils
- Planned capacity: 80 pupils
- Pupils with EHCPs: 100%

Primary Needs Profile

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

School Structure

- Current year groups: 4
- Planned year groups: 5
- Current classes: 8
- Planned classes: 10

School Year

- 36 teaching weeks per year

School Day

- Start: 8.30am
- Finish: 3.30pm



Operational Context

The school provides specialist education for pupils whose needs cannot be met successfully within mainstream settings.

Provision is designed to support pupils with ASC and associated needs within a structured, low-arousal environment.

Staffing ratios, curriculum design and therapeutic support reflect the specialist nature of the provision.

Conclusion

The proposed external classrooms, retention of the existing educational lodge and storage sheds, and the creation of a small enclosed MUGA are essential to the effective delivery of specialist education at Courtlands Independent Special School.

The proposals represent a proportionate, sensitive and educationally justified response to the needs of pupils with EHCPs. They balance educational necessity with heritage considerations, generate negligible transport impact and are supported by an identified local need for additional specialist provision.

Approval of this application will enable the school to continue meeting its statutory responsibilities whilst preserving the integrity and setting of the Grade II listed building and supporting some of the most vulnerable learners within the local community.