



R J Mitchell Primary School

Aspire, Believe and Achieve!

**Consultation on the proposals to
Implement a School-Based Nursery
Expand the SEND Unit
At R J Mitchell Primary School**



Havering
LONDON BOROUGH

Consultation on the proposals to

- **Implement a School-Based Nursery**
- **Expand the SEND Unit**

At R J Mitchell Primary School

Foreword

The corporate plan for Havering 'The Havering you want to be part of', includes the priority to offer inclusive services that raise aspiration and meet the needs of our growing population of children, families, and young adults, including those in our care.

The document is structured so that each proposal is explained separately. Part one sets out the proposal for the implementation of a nursery provision at the school. Part two sets out the proposal for the expansion of the school's SEND Unit.

Respondents are invited to consider and comment on either or both proposals, as applicable.

Part 1 – Implementation of school-based nursery

Introduction

Havering's Early Years and Childcare Sufficiency duties require the local authority to ensure there are sufficient, accessible and high-quality childcare places for children aged 0-4 years, particularly for disadvantaged families and those eligible for funded childcare entitlements. Expanding school-based nursery provision plays an important role in meeting this responsibility.

Background

The local authority regularly reviews childcare sufficiency across Havering to ensure that supply aligns with current and future demand. Evidence from the Childcare Sufficiency Report and Autumn Sufficiency Survey indicates that Elm Park ward currently experiences a shortage of places for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds, with very limited availability across existing providers.

Department for Work and Pensions data also shows that around 50% of eligible families in the Elm Park ward are not taking up their 2-year-old funded entitlement, suggesting unmet demand for accessible nursery provision. Birth data for the ward indicates that, following a slight decline, birth numbers have stabilised and are forecast to remain consistent in the coming years.

R J Mitchell Primary School is located within the Elm Park & South Hornchurch planning area, where several schools already operate school-based nursery provision. The school has available space on site that can be brought into use to support the local early years sufficiency strategy without destabilising the existing childcare market.

Rationale for the implementation of a School-Based Nursery

The school serves a community with relatively high levels of disadvantage. R J Mitchell Primary School has the highest proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals within the planning area and is above national averages for pupils with English as an additional language and special educational needs. Implementing a School-Based Nursery on this site will help improve early outcomes for children who may otherwise start school at a disadvantage.

The proposal

The London Borough of Havering is proposing to implement a new school-based nursery to provide quality early years provision for children aged 2 to 4 years, supporting funded childcare entitlements for eligible 2-year-olds and the universal and extended entitlements for 3- and 4-year-olds. The provision will prioritise flexibility to meet the needs of working families, including access to wraparound childcare where feasible.

The nursery will create 18 full time equivalent additional childcare places, comprising 13 places for 3- and 4-year-olds and 5 places for 2-year-olds. Places will be prioritised for families receiving additional support and for working families requiring extended hours. Children eligible for Early Years Pupil Premium, children with

special educational needs and disabilities, and looked after children will also be able to access the provision.

The nursery will be delivered through the refurbishment and extension of the caretaker's house located within the school site, supporting the local authority's strategy to make effective use of surplus space to provide additional education and childcare provision. This approach supports sustainability and ensures delivery without adversely impacting the wider operation of the school.

The nursery will be delivered through the refurbishment and extension of the caretaker's house located within the school site, supporting the local authority's strategy to make effective use of underused assets to increase education provision.

R J Mitchell Primary School offers an established wraparound childcare provision including SEND wraparound support as part of The Aspire Learning Federation. Where capacity allows, the nursery will link into the wraparound provision to further support working families. Parents may also be able to purchase additional hours, subject to availability.

The proposal will enhance the local early years offer, improve parental choice and help address unmet demand for nursery places within the Elm Park ward, while complementing existing childcare providers and supporting the overall sustainability of the local childcare market.

What will be the impact of the new facility on existing childcare providers

The school was recently inspected on 24 and 25 March 2026 and the inspection report is yet to be published.

There are currently 23 funded childcare providers operating within the Elm Park ward, the majority of which are judged Good or Outstanding. The local authority has considered the capacity and quality of the existing market and is satisfied that the proposed nursery will enhance the overall local offer without destabilising existing providers. The additional places will help address unmet demand rather than displace children currently attending other provisions.

What will be the impact on pupils and the wider school

The implementation of the nursery is not expected to have a negative impact on the pupils already attending the school. Instead, it will support smoother transition into Reception by enabling children to access early years provision within the same setting, allowing for the earlier identification of additional needs, strengthening engagement with families from an earlier stage, and contributing positively to the school's wider role within the local community.

Admission and Pupil Numbers

Admissions to the nursery will follow its own set processes and funded entitlement criteria, rather than the statutory school admissions process.

The nursery will provide up to 18 full time equivalent places, with the final allocation of hours dependent on parental choice and funding eligibility. Parents may be able to purchase additional hours where capacity allows.

The introduction of the nursery will not affect the school's statutory intake for Reception to Year 6.

Funding

The proposal is supported through the School-Based Nursery Capital Grant 2025/2026, where the application was successful.

Revenue funding for nursery places will be delivered through existing early years funding streams, including:

- Funded early years entitlements for 2-, 3- and 4-year-olds
- Early Years Pupil Premium, where applicable

The nursery is expected to operate on a financially sustainable basis once established.

Building works

The proposed nursery will be delivered through the refurbishment and extension of the caretaker's house located on the school site. Capital works will focus primarily on the ground floor of the building and will include internal reconfiguration and a ground floor extension to adapt the structure for use as a dedicated school-based nursery, ensuring compliance with statutory Early Years requirements, building regulations and safeguarding guidance.

The internal works will involve the removal of non-load bearing partitions to create age-appropriate playrooms, the installation of child and adult height sanitary and kitchen facilities, and upgrades to finishes and services where required. New doors will be installed to provide direct access to outdoor play areas, supporting free-flow indoor and outdoor learning in line with the EYFS framework.

A ground floor extension will provide additional play space for 2-year-old provision and associated ancillary accommodation, including toilet facilities, nappy changing and staff support areas. External works will include improvements to outdoor play areas, new surfacing and canopy installation.

The building will operate as a stand-alone nursery facility within the school's secure boundary. The upper floor of the building will be retained for ancillary storage and staff offices only and does not form part of the nursery accommodation. Bringing an underused building on the school site back into use in this way supports efficient delivery of the proposal while helping to minimise disruption to the wider school community.

Part 2 – Expansion of the SEND Unit to 50 places

Introduction

Havering’s SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2024 – 2028 emphasises the local authority’s vision to ensure children, young people, and families have access to the same level of high-quality support and education, wherever they live in Havering. That children and young people with SEND can access the help and support they need to thrive and achieve within their local communities, that they can go to local education provision that meets their needs, access services and play an active role in the community close to where they live.

While there are several schools operating Communication & Interaction (C&I) SEND Units, additional primary C&I SEND Units are required in order to meet the growing number of primary school aged pupils with C&I needs.

The expanded C&I SEND Unit at R J Mitchell Primary School will help meet key objectives from both the corporate and education visions for Havering.

Background

Havering’s Children and Young People Education Place Planning Plan states that a key planning guideline for SEND and Alternative Provision is for Havering to deliver additional SEND places by implementing new schools and new SEND Units.

Havering’s SEND projections show that the number of primary school pupils with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan is projected to increase.

The number of children and young people with C&I is projected to increase from 1872 in 2024/25 to 3305 in 2028/29.

Rationale for the expansion of the R J Mitchell Primary School SEND Unit

The Council’s SEND projections show that they expect the number of children and young people with an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan in the borough to increase over the next five years as shown in the table below:

Academic year	Cognition and Learning	Communication and Interaction	SEMH	Sensory and/or Physical	Total
2024/25	615	1872	605	261	3353
2025/26	646	2165	718	295	3823
2026/27	692	2534	864	342	4432
2027/28	735	2914	1009	392	5050
2028/29	783	3305	1199	443	5730

There are currently six primary schools with SEND units and one primary school with a Resourced Provision totalling 104 places, of which 78 places cater for pupils with Communication and Interaction/Autism Spectrum Disorder needs.

Given the increasing numbers of C&I pupils, there is a need for additional primary SEND Unit places to support these children within a mainstream school setting.

The expansion of this local specialist provision should reduce the need to place primary pupils outside of Havering, therefore reducing the cost of out of borough placements.

This expansion provides an opportunity to further develop the strong and well-established SEND practice currently delivered within the unit, building on its success in supporting pupils with Communication and Interaction needs.

The proposal

The London Borough of Havering intends to increase the number of places in the SEND Unit at R J Mitchell Primary School to 50 for pupils with Communication and Interaction needs, starting from September 2027, subject to approval.

The expansion of the SEND unit involves the removal of seven existing places reserved for nursery aged SEND pupils. Going forward, nursery aged SEND pupils will be accommodated within the nursery at Lime Academy Forest Approach, a special school. The remaining 14 places at the SEND unit will be increased to 50 places to accommodate SEND pupils with an EHCP in years reception to year 6.

Following the permanent reduction from two to one form of entry, the Local Authority proposes to use surplus space at the school to expand the SEND Unit. As of Spring 2026, 24% of pupils at R J Mitchell Primary School have an EHCP, marking the highest percentage across Havering's mainstream schools.

Expanding the SEND Unit will allow more pupils with additional needs to access specialist support within the school, providing a flexible approach that can be tailored to each child. The increased capacity will strengthen the school's provision for young people with Communication and Interaction needs, building on the current expertise and broadening support for a wider range of pupils.

Enhanced Support and Provision

The expanded SEND Unit will enable a greater number of pupils to benefit from specialist support, allowing them to access the mainstream curriculum while receiving tailored assistance. This approach builds on the current practice, where pupils combine learning within the unit and active participation in regular classes, fostering both inclusion and individual progress.

Staffing in the SEND Unit will continue to be comprised of experienced support and teaching staff with specialist expertise. This ensures that pupils with Communication and Interaction needs receive a consistently high standard of care and educational provision, supporting their academic and social development within the school environment.

What will be the impact of the new facility on other pupils in the school?

It is not envisaged that the expanded unit will impact negatively on other pupils in the school. The additional specialist places if established, would further enhance the educational offer the school is able to provide in the most inclusive environment possible, 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.

Admission and Pupil Numbers

Admissions to the SEND Unit will follow a different procedure from that operating for the rest of the school. Admissions into the SEND Unit will be through the Havering SEND EHC panel process. This will not impact on pupils who are in the mainstream setting at the school.

Pupils attending the SEND Unit would be in addition to the mainstream Planned Admission Number (PAN) of 30. This proposal is to expand the SEND Unit to 50 places, increasing the specialist provision capacity while maintaining the schools standard PAN for mainstream pupils.

Funding

SEND Units in Havering will normally be funded in accordance with a Place Led Funding approach that complies with the Government's SEND Funding Reforms which came into effect in April 2018.

For each place in the SEND Unit, the R J Mitchell Primary School will receive £30,800. This is made up of £10,000 'place funding' and £20,800 (2026/27 rate) 'top-up funding'.

Building works

The proposal will make use of existing surplus accommodation within the school site which was made available when the school reduced its intake from 60 to 30. The surplus accommodation will be remodelled to provide specialist teaching areas for SEND pupils. This may include internal alterations, access improvements, and the creation of SEND specific learning environments.

What happens next?

The consultation is an opportunity for interested parties and stakeholders to express views and ask questions on the principle of

- Implementing a school-based nursery
- Expanding the existing SEND Unit

At R J Mitchell Primary School during the consultation period.

The consultation period starts on **Monday 01 June 2026** and will close on **Monday 29 June 2026**.

R J Mitchell Primary School is part of The Aspire Learning Federation which operates as a maintained school federation. Any proposed organisational changes must therefore follow the process for making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools. In this case, the local authority is the decision maker, rather than the Department for Education, and the final decision on whether the proposal may be approved for implementation will rest with the London Borough of Havering, in accordance with the prescribed alterations guidance.

The process for making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools can be viewed in more detail here:

[Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools - August 2025](#)

Key Milestones	Date
Consultation Period	01/06/2026 – 29/06/2026
Decision	July 2026
Implementation of the school-based nursery	January 2027
Implementation of the expansion to the SEND Unit	September 2027

Have your say...

You can state whether you support this proposal or not by completing the consultation questionnaire via the link below or by scanning the QR Code:

<https://consultation.havering.gov.uk/education/rj-mitchell-school>

If you have any other questions regarding this proposal, please email: schoolsorganisation@havering.gov.uk

This consultation document is being sent electronically to all parents/carers, governors, school teachers and support staff who work at R J Mitchell Primary School.



Electronic copies are also being sent to all Havering primary, secondary and special schools, Havering Councillors, MPs, Church Dioceses, Early Years and Childcare providers, unions and other stakeholders.

The document will also be available on the London Borough of Havering and R J Mitchell Primary School websites throughout the consultation period.