

Park Special Nursery School Consultation – Anonymised representations.

No. & RAG	<p>Green - A concerned citizen who may have some knowledge and/or experience of this complex issue. This knowledge may or may not be current and/or the respondent has given no viable solution.</p> <p>Amber - Respondent has or has had a relationship with The Parks Special Nursery School, perhaps directly or indirectly. The decision may or may not have an impact on either their setting or them personally.</p> <p>Red - Respondent may be directly impacted by any decision regarding The Parks Special Nursery School or may have a solution which should be or has already been considered by Rutland County Council.</p> <p>Date received and anonymised representation.</p>
1	<p>2/11/23</p> <p>Part of me thinks, what is the point in writing this email, and putting my input in, it probably won't be read, my voice won't be heard, no positives will come of this.</p> <p>I have come to realise and learn how lonely the SEN world is, and how very uneducated people are of the SEN community.</p> <p>**</p> <p>I truly believe we have been failed, there is very little support, knowledge and understanding of autism, I was one of those uneducated people once, I had no understanding of autism, I wasn't really aware of it. It was only due to my research I really started to understand, my ** clearly has autism, it was clear as day looking back at videos and pictures as a baby, huge red flags, not responding to name, nonverbal, no understanding, no sense of danger, stimming, no eye contact</p> <p>I showed my concern, I reached out to professionals and they responded with ** is a boy, they are lazy..... bringing my first child up who has autism, was a challenge, an completely unexpected journey, and sadly very lonely, with zero support.</p> <p>Then the parks happened, ** started at the parks non verbal, ** needs a quiet space, a lot of empathy, the best knowledge and understanding of autism and lots of patience. The staff have been so brilliant, they have supported me, been a shoulder to cry on, became my child's second family, the family we needed but don't have. They are the family I can hand ** over too who has very little communication using Makaton and visual learning to communicate. ** was there a whole year! They have changed ** life. They have made a positive impact on ** future, setting ** the right direction, teaching ** in ** own unique way, listening to ** when he needs to be heard, ** wasn't quite ready to shine. But the parks found ** and **is absolutely shinning.</p> <p>Every child needs the opportunity and the chance.... People are becoming more aware of autism, Rutland has military families, so there are always children moving to the area and many would benefit from the parks, people are unaware it exists, family's need help to be guided and supported, help make people aware that there are places and services out there to give you support. A child's first 5 years are the most important years of their life, in those years you learn so much, what you learn will guide you down the best path uniquely created for you, leading you to a successful happy life, add additional needs into the mix, a child is having to learn harder and more unique to meet their needs. I really struggle to see how a mainstream provision can provide this, it is not the same. And unfortunately, you just don't get it, and clearly not willing to see the beauty in the parks, and give them the chance, and instead of shutting them down, embrace the parks, make it bigger again, give children the support be the better county. A SEN child needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •the right setting •the right knowledge •the understanding • the patience

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •the support •the passion •the empathy •the love •the guidance •the space •the family <p>All that was given to my ** in just a year! ** has had the best educational start to life, and found ** beautiful path...</p> <p><i>**identifying personal details redacted.</i></p>
2	<p>3/11/23</p> <p>I want to convey my support for this facility to remain open.</p> <p>I feel it's vital that there is a facility in Rutland that specialises in supporting those that have complex needs. We are an ever growing community and if this is lost it will never be replaced.</p> <p>I do not have any links to Parks and I don't have a child with special needs, however in my wider family we do have children with complex needs and we have witnessed their parents fighting tooth and nail to get the support they needed. In fact in one case they took the local authority to court and won their case, this could have been avoided had common sense prevailed.</p> <p>Politicians do not understand the stresses and strains of raising a child with complex needs, simple tasks can be difficult and challenging.</p> <p>Such facilities like Parks unlock the potential for a child with complex needs, which is taken through to adulthood. This can enable someone to live independently. Closing Parks will not only impact on the 'here and now 'but it will be felt for years to come. The decision could potentially create a ticking time bomb for the future.</p> <p>I fully support Parks remaining open and I will support any campaign that is fighting this, I have already signed the petition.</p>
3	<p>3/11/23</p> <p>**</p> <p>Today, I was shocked and saddened to hear of the possible closure of The Parks School. Shocked because SEN children have as much right to an education within their area as any other child and saddened to think that the most vulnerable in our communities have yet again, been targeted as scapegoats for a budget. With fewer children, parents and teachers involved, the idea is to take the low hanging fruit. It disgusts me.</p> <p>Where are these children to go? Taxi them miles from their homes causing distress and possible difficulties for their parents? Take them out of their own environment where they grow up? Spend a fortune on taxi's and carers each day with parents not always sure that the same people will be awarded the contracts each term – with children then having to get used to another set of drivers and carers?</p> <p>I understand that budgets have to be met – but why is it always the most vulnerable who are targeted. These children have their whole lives in front of them. The education and social development that our grandchild received at The Parks was exceptional, enabling ** to move forward and develop to the point where we can see her now contributing to society in some small way.</p>

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	<p>I vehemently oppose your proposal to close The Parks School in Oakham and urge you to have some common humanity and find a way to cater for our young children. <i>**identifying personal details redacted.</i></p>
4	<p>3/11/23 I am contacting from my company a stage 4 approved AP working with Cambridgeshire, Peterborough, Bedfordshire, Lincolnshire and Rutland.</p> <p>I have just read the article regarding the closure of The Parks. Is there any way we can assist and support this - we have 3 AP venues in the area and looking to expand in to neighbouring LAs?</p>
5	<p>3/11/23 I am writing to express my deep frustration and disappointment regarding your decision to recommend the closure of The Parks School. ** I am appalled by your apparent disregard for the specialist needs and rights of the youngest and most vulnerable children in Rutland. It is clear that your decision is primarily motivated by financial concerns. While it is true that specialist education can be expensive, it is crucial to remember that our SEN children have the same legal right to an education as their peers. Many of them require the support and expertise of specialist staff in a small specialized environment in order to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. While some children with EHCPs may be able to cope in mainstream schools, they may have achieved even greater success and been happier in a more specialized setting.</p> <p>Rutland currently holds the shameful distinction of being one of the only counties in the country without a Primary or Secondary Special School. As a result, the council is forced to send significant numbers of SEN children out of county to access the specialist provision they require. This not only incurs substantial costs in terms of securing school places and transportation, but it also means that families like mine are left with limited options and are at the mercy of neighboring counties. While we are grateful for the opportunities provided by these counties, the provision may not always be suited to our child's specific needs. It is also important to note that these schools are bursting at the seams with children from their own county. Surely, these funds spent on educating and transporting our children out of county could be better spent thus allowing The Parks to remain open.</p> <p>Rutland needs to retain its only Special School, The Parks and take proactive steps to ensure that early years children with SEN receive the specialist support they need from a much earlier age. This includes issuing EHCPs for early years children and providing meaningful early intervention services. It is appalling to hear that the council has been systematically refusing to issue EHCPs for those in early years settings, therefore resulting in the decline in the number of students at The Parks, making it appear financially unsustainable. By doing so, you are playing with the rights of the most vulnerable members of our community, which is truly shameful and unacceptable. It is essential that you prioritize the needs of these children and provide them with the specialized education and support they require.</p> <p>Closing The Parks School will not only have a detrimental impact on the students and families currently attending, but it will also leave a significant gap in the provision of SEN education in Rutland. Sending these children on to early years nurseries that are ill-equipped to nurture these additional SEN children is not appropriate but also disrupts their social and educational development. It is crucial that Rutland has its own Special Schools to cater to the unique needs of these children and provide them with a nurturing and inclusive learning environment.</p> <p>Furthermore, the council's refusal to issue EHCPs in a timely manner is a clear violation of the rights of these children. Early intervention is crucial for their development, and by delaying the provision of EHCPs, you are denying them the support they need at a critical stage in their</p>

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	<p>education. This approach is not only unjust but also short-sighted, as it will likely lead to greater challenges and costs in the long run.</p> <p>I implore you to reconsider your decision to close The Parks School and instead invest in the education and well-being of our youngest children with SEN. They deserve equal opportunities and access to quality education, and it is the council's duty to ensure that these rights are upheld. Please prioritize the needs of these vulnerable children and work towards providing them with the specialized education and support they require.</p>
6	<p>3/11/23 (first representation)</p> <p>**I truly think closing the parks is a mistake. The parks is needed and wanted but getting the EHCP to get in is taking to long and is to difficult a process. I know of several family's hoping to attend the parks in sept 24. Unfortunately you are ill informed and wrong in your assumptions. Maybe spend some time with the families who need the parks and humbly learn just why it must endure.</p> <p>**</p> <p>The Parks is warmth and nurture, and caring, The Parks is calm, and steady, and inclusive. The team there are peaceful and engaging, thoughtful and perceptive, supportive and enabling. We tried a mainstream pre-school first, we were nudged firmly in that direction. It was lovely, the staff kind and friendly. They remain friends to us to this day, and watch our journey with interest. But mainstream was too busy, it was sudden and loud, it was far too bright, it was too fast and too unpredictable . . . I stayed EVERY session, I was always visible and accessible to **, yet still ** only managed an hour at a time. Sleep was non-existent, food was refused, ** screamed every night, **broke things, smashed things. ** tried to interact, but ** couldn't, the quantity of other children bemused **, we saw no way to help **.</p> <p>So we got our EHCP, on our second try. We had found our harbour, we had found The Parks From our first visit to The Parks we found where we belonged. Not just **, but our whole family have benefited. There is more sleep, ** has tried school dinners, **uses gentle hands, ** manages a whole school day and is sad to come home. They celebrate every achievement with us, they offer unwavering support and advice, they helped us through half-terms unending holiday with links, regular texts, and support packs.</p> <p>The Parks has a place, and a purpose, and it is powerful.</p> <p>The Parks and its staff have given ** the right beginning on her journey, and I will forever support and fight for it to be every child's right to have an appropriate educational place in a setting that meets their needs.</p> <p>22/11/23 (second representation)</p> <p>**</p> <p>Do not make such a massive mistake. We need this school</p> <p>**story part 2 What does The Parks do? **ago, ** non-verbal and at a lovely mainstream preschool. Yet ** never said a word, never made a sound. When ** laughed it was silent, when ** needed something ** made no attempt to ask or gesture or sign - ** just endured, existed on the very edge of those around **.</p>

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** ago, ** started at the parks.

** knows all ** letters and colours, ** numbers, ** shapes; ** fruits and vegetables and, if you have ever had the joy of accompanying us to Rutland Farm Park, ** chickens - and all her not-chickens.

** can ask for food, ** can request a drink, ** can ask for **shoes,** toothbrush, and **big sister. ** can tell you when ** hurt, when ** tired, when ** sad, and when ** is happy, **laugh is loud and rich and beautiful and often.

This time, you need to know I'm still an exhausted mother, I've waited four years for ** voice . . . to hear **, to talk with **, for ** to say mummy. This week I got my wish, when ** said it to me for the first time.  

What does the parks do?

It reached ** when I could not, it nurtured ** in ways I'd not thought of, it calmed **, redirected **, taught ** and enabled **, it engaged **. The parks, and its staff, gave ** a place that allowed **, at ** own pace and in ** own time, to find ** voice.

Closing The Parks would be a travesty, so like my **, I'm not remaining on the edge anymore, I'm using my voice and asking you to help us save The Parks.

28/11/23 (third representation)

**

Please read ** stories, please think very carefully what you are taking away from my child and future children. We tried mainstream, it didn't work for her.

We have days to save The Parks.....

What's a day?

12:15 am - ** is awake in my bed, asking for ** school, we cuddle and I shush ** as ** big ** needs to sleep, ** dad needs to sleep.

01:30 am - We give up, ** asks to put on ** "cosy" and ** "Christmas feet", so we can go downstairs. We put The Grinch on TV (which will play, on a loop, until ** leaves for school), we move the cats off he sofa, we doze, and chat, and ** asks for ** school.

04:00 am - We have breakfast - white cereal, 3 biscuits, juice in ** cup, half a banana ** asks for ** school.

06:00 am - ** asks for ** school again. We get dressed, ** in in ** blue Stitch T-shirt, we pack ** lunch box, snack, and swim stuff. ** asks for ** school - ** waits by the front door.

08:30 am - Off to school - asking for ** school, without separation anxiety or reservation, just pure joy and delight, ** walks away from me, ** doesn't look back.

3.30 pm - Home from school, we have tears - ** wants ** school.

4.30 pm - Teatime: peanut butter crackers, 3 slices of cucumber. ** asks for ** school.

7:00 pm - Supper and sleep medication, then bath-time, still ** asks for ** school.

8:00 pm - Bed time, we talk about school.

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	<p>What is one day to ** it's being at school, ** school, The Parks. It is structure, routine, joy, and expectation. It is safety, calmness, nurture, and learning. It is freedom, understanding, and acceptance. It is just what ** needs.</p> <p>What's a day? A day is time, it's time to sign the petition, it's time to email the council, it's time to support and to protest. That's all we need, time. That's all The Parks needs, time . . . preferably years of it.</p> <p><i>**identifying personal details redacted.</i></p>
7	<p>4/11/23</p> <p>Having worked ** and seen the difference it makes not just with the children but their parents/carers Removing this facility will profoundly affect the development of not only the existing children but future children as well. The effect on the parents of these children will also be significant in terms of transport and time to out of county Special Needs Setting.</p>
8	<p>4/11/23 (first representation)</p> <p>I would like to state that although I was not at the meeting last night I feel completely betrayed that RCC is planning to close the parks school.</p> <p>You state it isn't financially viable. However, all schools struggle and it would be more financially detrimental to the public council in the long run to close it and have a huge impact on the community. We spend more on social care for adults because we didn't invest in their futures or ehcps for homeschooling as there would be no where accessible for the children. Costing so much more in tutors, programs and therapies to compensate for what would of save money to simply have a school like the parks.</p> <p>It is so clearly needed because;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * It is providing an early years setting where children with SEN or need support and cannot cope in mainstream nurseries * It had been invested in by the public to improve facilities from the put door play area by tesco to hydrotherapy pool access lift. *There are many SEN children in the area that access or awaiting access to the parks. We have the highest amount of sen children in the country according to one of your surveys *It has expert staff who are trained to support and teach SEN children in a specialist setting. And over county's are over subscribed. *Sending children to other settings would cost money in travel for RCC and its constituents, not to mention local nurseries have stated they can't cope. They are not built for the environment needed. * my own child attended the parks and would not be where he is today if it wasn't for the limited class size and teaching support the school provides * The public WANT and NEED the school. It is an important part of our community and education. EDUCATION SHOULD BE A PROPRITY FOR ALL INC DISABLED. To close it would be discrimination. * It would compromise the RCC promise to work with parents and listen. The whole project you have created to work with us, would be undermined by shutting the school. <p>In addition to this you have made it harder and harder to access defeating the object of its purpose. You now need an ehcp to get a placement at the parks where before it was a special setting to gather evidence for an ehcp for children who clearly don't cope in mainstream</p>

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settings because it is simply too busy.. The council provided a 121 and they still stated he needed a place at the parks. The parks is a specialist setting designed to be calm and accommodating to ** needs including ** sensory disorder. Your facts stating there is no need are incorrect, in fact there are children now struggling at nurseries. This has a huge impact on their development and mental health as well as their families. The parks offer support you state you as a council are geared to provide but to remove the parks would be a huge step backwards which would cause irreparable damage to children in need.

Where are these children suppose to go if mainstream nurseries have already stated they are overwhelmed and not equipped for these young children. Where are they suppose to get their ehcp and gather evidence. Out of county is not practical or sensible. We can not stick a 2 year old on transport, if it was your child, how would you feel about it all. Over the years you state we have supported up to 8 children in the park. This is simply incorrect when ** was referred ** had to wait for a space and they already had around 12 children at the parks and he could only access 2 days a week. As well as the childminders because your report stated **needed the specialist intervention and opportunity to gather evidence for the ehcp. The parks should change its entry requirement to no ehcp as it was in 2015 and you should allow out of county children to be referred from towns such as melton. To make financially viable. As we send children to birchwood. We should be sharing the load and thus save money doing so. There are other ways to save money without making a detrimental impact to our community or putting families and children through unnecessary hardship and mental stress.

Thank you for your time and I hope you take these comments seriously.

5/11/23 (second representation)

Please note some incorrect facts in this report and some observations...

It is incorrect that The Parks can only support a maximum of 8 children at a time. We had 13 children on role one year and regularly a number greater than 8. There have been waiting lists at times.

It is very mysterious that suddenly there are 'no' children below reception age requiring a place. I question how this has come to be.

The parks have witnessed MIRACULOUS transformations and progress in the children who attended e.g. a child going from non verbal to verbal like my child ** and for their families

The council has tried to close The Parks previously and failed due to public opinion. Because The Rutland Hub has already been set up and is running with the remit to support children below Reception however this is not being successful as many request ehcps still and being pulled from mainstream nursery settings

Mainstream placements are NOT suitable for many children with SEN, for a myriad of reasons. I support change and progress and a teacher ** created a model of The Parks moving forward which fulfilled the criteria of what the report team said they wished for the children of the county. I feel that this was conveniently swept under the carpet.

I fully understand the Council's need to save money, with proper and full consultation this could have been achieved whilst still meeting the needs of ALL children to an outstanding standard. We may never see this happen now as your email for 30 days didn't work initially as I emailed and had mailer failure delivery and had to wait 3 days to send. This is my second email to highlight some facts.

30 days is not enough when it actually equates to 20 working days if emails are staffed.

30/11/23 (third representation)

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I would like to address serious concerns regarding your questions and answers published on the website. It is far from clear as your responses do not marry up to each question of what is being said.

Further more simple facts like the name of the school are not accurate e.g. It is not Oakham primary school. We have many primary schools in Oakham. I have attached some comments with regard to each section.

I would also like to add its highly inappropriate that this decision is going to cabinet rather than public on the 11th January. Especially when that is clearly not enough time to truly review public commenrs and feedback. It is also unethical as the lead officer is ** who has on more than one occasion verbally stated she wanted to close the school before the consultation began. Not to mention most of the cabinet (if not all) are from the same political party. Therefore the views of the constituents representated by Rutland are unbalanced and is all one sided. Therefore it fails the principle of demoacracy vote for decisions as important as this.

Furthermore please attached a screen shot for one of the minutes from one the meetings with **. Whereby it states that the send Improvemnr plan. DBV had stated it was to be carried out over the next 18 to 24months to work on improving SEND provision for long term goals. The key work streams of need identified that are specifically relating to my Objection are the following;

Building additional resources within school support partnership to avoid special placements. Since when did avoiding disability needs become a priority. If a sen placement is need the needs of the child come first not whether they can fit in your policies or budget. That is unlawful.

And the second point states the goal is to improve community and parental support. Closing the school is the exact opposite of the support and improvement. The school was rate outstanding by ofsted. Surely ita absurd to close a school that is needed (as there 7 children in Rutland wanting access not 2) despite what your report states because case officers have said don't name it as a provision.

I do hope you reconsider expecially after the BBC has covered this story again this morning on the news.

***identifying personal details redacted.*

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4/11/23

I have grave concerns around this proposal. Many children who started at The Parks have latterly moved on to Birch Wood Area Special School, a Leicestershire County Council maintained school. These are children who have complex needs, rarely if ever met within a DSP. I would like to know more detailed evidence (figures) that children with severe and complex learning disabilities are having their needs met within Rutland schools.

Birch Wood School has been under increasing pressure to take children over number, this has included children from Rutland where there is no specialist provision. This year we have 227 on role. Our DFE net capacity assessment suggests we are significantly over number. Our planned admission was 190. This year our numbers have crept up again and this has included EYFS children from Rutland. LCC continue to invest in specialist places, RCC have not. I feel this is creating an inequality in accessibility for Rutland parents.

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	<p>Greater inclusion is very important within mainstream, but denying complex children access to appropriate support is a social justice issue. The Parks was a valuable resource to your families, its closure is a great loss to some of the most vulnerable in your community.</p>
10	<p>5/11/23</p> <p>Absolutely shocking these children need the school. As a father of a child with special needs these schools are to far and wide apart to close them. ** goes to Willoughby at Bourne and if that closed, we would be stuck where to send ** so to hear what's being proposed has made me angry and you have my full support</p> <p><i>**identifying personal details redacted.</i></p>
11	<p>5/11/23</p> <p>I would like to email to express my serious concerns regarding the proposed closure of the Parks Specialist Nursery. I am a parent of a child in Melton Mowbray who has an ehcp. When my daughter was younger we desperately wanted for our daughter to attend the Parks after mainstream and an educational psychologist stated ** needed a specialist nursery. We were refused a place due to being out of county! It was our nearest specialist nursery despite being out of county! The fact that Rutland County Council state there is not sufficient need is down to its ridiculous criteria it has put in place to access it, not because there isn't need! I am absolutely disgusted to hear that this is even being considered before changing the admissions process as if the admissions process was changed, many more families would be accessing it!</p> <p><i>**identifying personal details redacted.</i></p>
12	<p>6/11/23</p> <p>We are greatly concerned at the Council's proposal to close The Parks Special School and would ask you please to re-consider.</p> <p>The school provides absolutely essential levels of care and education for pupils with special needs – needs which can only be addressed in a purpose designed facility and by teachers with a particular skills and understanding. That is what The Parks provides and there is no other similar facility in Rutland.</p> <p>To remove this provision and suggest that the pupils go elsewhere is a dereliction of the Council's duty to the Rutland community which you represent.</p> <p>We understand that the proposal has been made because of the cost of running and maintaining the school. However, to close the school now would be an extremely short-sighted position to take. The cost of transporting children elsewhere and the on-going cumulative cost of their health care as they grow up will far outweigh any short term economic benefit.</p> <p>You also have a responsibility to consider the mental distress that will be caused to the pupils and the distress and added difficulty posed to their parents that closure of The Park will inevitably cause.</p> <p>Please do not make this decision.</p>
13	<p>6/11/23</p> <p>** attends this amazing school. Due to the hard work, dedication, amazing skills and love of all the staff ** has become verbal, can use the toilet, interact, read, write, try different foods. ** is flourishing and growing. The staff also support the family in such a wonderful way. We</p>

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	<p>know how privileged we are to have such an amazing school which is down to the hardworking and amazing staff. The school has helped nurture a wonderful future for **</p> <p>This constant threat of closure is unacceptable to the staff, the children, their families and the community. This school is so very needed and instead of this constant closure threat it should be celebrated and held high as a school of excellence and inspiration.</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
14	<p><i>7/11/23 (first representation)</i></p> <p>I am emailing yourself with the discust that you are planning on closing the Parks special school.</p> <p>Personally for me this will affect my little family, ** we are on the autism pathway for a diagnosis as well as global developmental delay as well as non verbal. We have just received ** school admissions letter which we cannot complete as mainstream schooling isn't possible for him. He has already been assessed by an educational psychologist that was paid by yourselfs which states he needs specialist setting. We are going to be inputting a request for a ehcp thishis week with a lot of evidence that he needs specialist.</p> <p>As far as I'm aware the dsp unit which you are suggesting to parents is still classed as mainstream as it's not 100% specialist. Will it have the expertise and experience the parks teachers have, I very much doubt it....</p> <p>If we refuse dsp and you close the parks the next option for my child is Birchwood in Melton if we can get him in there. My concerns are ** I do not and will not send ** over there at that young age because yourself dedcided to close the parks. I know of 2 other parents who are wanting the parks next year for reception so that's 3 children for the parks.</p> <p>As a parent I want the best for my child and the parks is. I know it, our family do, ** nursery teachers know it and also speak to your inclusion officers you employ they can tell you that too...</p> <p>Please can you listen to the parents of Rutland and accept of this school closes there will be a lot of disadvantaged children that won't get the support they need.</p> <p><i>18/11/23 (second representation)</i></p> <p>I am a parent who is wanting to send my child ** to the parks special school in September 2024 when ** should be starting primary reception like all of ** other peers. We have recently received ** school admissions letter which we cannot doing anything as mainstream schooling isn't possible.</p> <p>** is on the waiting list for a autism diagnosis as well as being developmentally delayed and has the learning age of a 18 month old. ** is also non verbal ** makes sounds but you cannot have a conversation at all with ** and ** doesn't understand basic tasks that are asked of ** ie putting ** coat on and eating with a knife and fork. ** is also in nappys and has no way to tell us when ** needs to go to the toilet.</p> <p>At the minute ** is a mainstream nursery who have been fantastic with **and offer ** support but ** doesn't learn there like the other children ** age do. ** is happy and settled there and is happy with the environment but there expertise only goes so far. Also with ** being happy there it gives me and my husband time for ourselves as selfish as that sounds.</p>

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	<p>Half the reason we chose the nursery for ** as it is next door to the parks to the surroundings are familiar to **.</p> <p>Last Friday ** nursery with request from myself and my husband have issued a application for ** to be assessed for a ehcp.</p> <p>The dsp unit that has been spoken is more to help children with additional needs and help them to be integrated into mainstream settings. But I can guarantee I will be pressured into naming it as the school we want to send ** regardless of ** needs just because it's the easiest option. We have also been told by inclusion about birchwood in Melton but personally I do not want to send ** to a primary school out of county just yet at the age of **.</p> <p>If ** was to access the parks ** will have the chance to use the speech therapists, occupational therapists the lists go on.</p> <p>In summery I feel like that the expression lamb to slaughter will be * if parks is closed next year. So please challenge to comments of no child that needs access to this school.</p> <p>** Identifying personal details redacted</p>
15	<p><i>7/11/23 (first representation)</i></p> <p>** attended the parks ** needs the parks. ** due to start school Sept 24, ** autism diagnosis ehcp draft, **needs the parks school like so many other children past and present.</p> <p><i>8/11/23 (second representation)</i></p> <p>Past parent hopeful present parent.</p> <p>** has been well known to the local authority for over a year, ** has a diagnosis of autism an agreed draft plan (for months) I have been told lies, I have told any and everybody ** needs the parks, its going to panel, ** should start the parks on this date(amazing) to then be told by the school oh ** been put forward for the dsp/mainstream. They cant meet **needs, So I emailed for an update, told (I will ring you Tuesday) nothing, I emailed for an update a couple more times and nothing ,eventually I was told again it was going to panel for the parks, if agreed only for a few months, I believe the local authority is ignoring and lying about these children who desperately need the parks school and fobbing parents off to meet there own narrative, this school has proved it is very much needed, but unfortunately to many parents are being detered with the very famous saying (they will be fine in mainstream)I have been told it with my ** children, mainstream is not suitable for everyone, and the nail in the coffin for me was, it is going to panel for the parks but there is a place in Sept 24 for a school in Grantham, WHY does it have to go to panel for a local school, you know our home town, but Grantham is a given, I and many others think,(cover up) to meet the local authority needs, it is disgusting that a few people that have no knowledge or experience with a diagnosis or additional needs gets to decide the fate of so many of the most vulnerable in our society. ** has missed so much valuable time in a setting because Rutland County Council want to close THE PARKS for the sake of saving a few quid, the future of our most vulnerable is worth so much more.</p> <p>** Identifying personal details redacted</p>
16	<p><i>7/11/23</i></p> <p>Good Morning ** I think it will be a bad idea for you to close the parks because we have seen the benefits of the work the staff have done to help improve the children's education. Plus,</p>

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	<p>we have good friends who had their own children go to the parks. They have seen such a massive difference in their own child or children. The Parks has been a part of Oakham all our lives. we have seen the good and dedication of how much work the school and staff do to help the child or children and for the parents of the children. Please could you re think about the closure. it's about the children and they would have to go out of town and that would cost you more money in transport to take the children to the nearest place replacement setting. Other parents may not have the best income with sending their children out of the county for school because their have different kind of need that other school may not have the best understanding or knowledge support the children or child. this will make it hard for grandparents who pick up their grandchild up from the park. If your decision to close down the parks will have a very deep effect on the whole of Oakham and other schools like the parks pleas think long and hard on what you are going to deicide</p> <p>** Identifying personal details redacted</p>
<p>17 18 19 20 21 22</p>	<p><i>7/11/23 from 2 different people</i> <i>9/11/23 from 2 different people</i> <i>25/11/23 from 2 different people</i></p> <p>My name is ** and I am a Rutland resident. My address is **. My connection to the Parks is none. I have a deeply held moral belief that education is a basic human right, and it is the responsibility of a civilised society to care for its most vulnerable, which OFSTED recognise the Parks is “outstanding” in so doing.</p> <p>I object to the proposed closure of The Parks on the following grounds: (delete as appropriate).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I believe that there are children for whom The Parks is an essential provision, because they would simply not be able to cope in mainstream nurseries, even with additional support. T** will have an enormous negative impact on the children themselves, because children will miss out on early intervention which could help their development. • I do not believe that mainstream nurseries have the skills, expertise, experience or facilities in house to meet the needs of highly complex and disabled children, particularly those with significant physical disabilities, who need highly adapted communication environments, extremely small class sizes. • I believe that the cost of supporting these children in mainstream nurseries will cost more than educating them in the Parks, because they will require expensive additional equipment, changes to the environment, and specialist support staff. It will cost the council less to support these children together in a small group in The Parks, where they can share specialised staffing and equipment. • I believe that the evidence is that early intervention for children with SEND is vital, and for some, the intensive, specialist intervention that The Parks can offer them cannot be replicated within mainstream provision. • I do not believe that in the long run, closing The Parks will save council money, as without t** important early, intensive intervention, more children will end up needing specialist schools, which will mean sending even more children out of county to get the support they need.

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- I believe the challenging behaviour that would be seen from disabled children who are struggling to cope in mainstream provision would be distressing both for them and those around them, having a negative impact on everyone, and potentially place all children at risk.
- I believe that for many of these children, they would not be able to form meaningful relationships with their age-peers because their developmental levels are so different. In order not to feel isolated, they need to be with those with similar needs to them.
- I there are children with disabilities who need The Parks because their needs will not be fully met mainstream Reception classes, even those in the DSP and will need specialist provision. If the Parks were kept open, it could be adapted to provide t** provision, and therefore include more children.
- I do not believe that children who need The Parks would be able to access a mainstream curriculum, even if it is highly differentiated, without being isolated and marked out from their peers.
- I believe that within a mainstream environment, they would be included “in name only” in reality leading almost a parallel experience to their mainstream peers, and gaining little if any benefits from being around non-disabled peers.
- I do not think it morally right to reduce specialist provision for the most profoundly disabled and vulnerable children, so that more can be spent on those who’s needs are such that they are able to access mainstream.
- I do not agree that at a time where across the country other counties are building more special school places, that Rutland should be reducing the special school places. I do not understand why Rutland is different to every other county in that it does not have any children who need specialist education in reception.
- I do not accept that all parents with children with the complex needs for which The Parks caters would prefer their children educated in mainstream nurseries or in the designated specialist provision, and I believe in parental choice as per the code of practice.
- I believe that if The Parks closes, more parents will go to tribunal to get specialist provision for their children, which will incur additional legal costs to Rutland County Council.
- I believe that rather than a falling demand for the sort of “outstanding” education The Parks provides, it has instead been made harder and harder for parents to access. For many years, The Parks was oversubscribed, and has accommodated 13 children in the past.
- I do not feel that all the options for making the Parks viable have been fully explored, including but not limited to;
 - o facilitating quicker access for those children who’s needs have not been fully diagnosed
 - o facilitating access for those children with significant needs who have not yet completed the EHCP process
 - o expanding provision to include KS1
 - o using the facilities and staff in the holidays to provide more cost-effective respite care for children with disabilities.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I do not think it right that young, highly vulnerable and disabled children should have to be bussed out of county to access specialist support. Aside from their welfare, it is expensive and not environmentally friendly.• At a time when other local authorities are investing in more special school places, I object that Rutland County Council are reducing their provision. <p>I have grave concerns over this proposal – on financial, practical and moral grounds, both for the children and families whom The Parks serves, and the wider community. I therefore object in the strongest possible terms to the proposal, and I urge Rutland County Council in the strongest possible terms to pursue strategies which would make The Parks viable without closing it or reducing the provision that it is able to offer.</p> <p><i>** identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
23	<p>7/11/23 (first representation)</p> <p>I would like to voice my thoughts on the proposal to close The Parks school.</p> <p>To confirm the details as asked in the consultation, my name is **. My relationship to The Parks is an individual who thoroughly believes that the setting should remain open to support our most vulnerable children and provide them with the opportunities and support they need to be successful.</p> <p>To explain my points. Frankly, I believe the proposal to close The Parks is ludicrous and quite honestly discriminatory to some of the YOUNGEST and MOST VULNERABLE children.</p> <p>The consultation stated that The Parks was ‘no longer financially viable’. My question here is, what has been done to MAKE The Parks financially viable?</p> <p>Going back to my discriminatory point. The consultation proposes to send children with SEN of nursery age into ANY nursery. How does this promote inclusion when the sole purpose of The Parks school is to provide a setting for these children to allow them to access education. By putting these children in any given nursery, which are catered for mainstream education, children with SEN will become lost due to the busy, over stimulating and intense environment. The Parks school is catered to provide a nurturing, low arousal environment with staff numbers to support these children. Furthermore, by the closure of The Parks and these children entering other nurseries, other children will miss out due to adult attention needed to be taken away to support these SEN children.</p> <p>My next point would come to the consultation argument of ‘The Parks has been under subscribed’. Firstly, pardon? Who is responsible for providing places for The Parks? The council. Who has not been referring children to The Parks? The council? Who wants to shut The Parks because there are not enough children on role? The council! How on earth does this make sense? Further coming back to my point of, what has the council done to make The Parks financially viable BESIDES turning away children?</p> <p>The Parks is a place where children thrive. They can access their potential. Families of the children are supported. The school is rated Outstanding by OFSTED. Yet the council wants to close it? In the words of the council ‘Special Needs nurseries are increasingly rare across the country’. Okay? Surely that’s even more reason to keep The Parks open!</p> <p>My next point would come to the proposal to put SEN children in any nursery. Aside from saying there are no children that require these special nurseries, that’s ridiculous because</p>

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there are. That's not even a discussion point. There are these children, because the council WANTS to put them in a mainstream nursery! It's a contradiction by the council.

The council claims they want to use the money from The Parks closure to support EYFS SEN children. Okay. So nursery age children with SEN get to suffer from this? Really? So the council plans to take from these vulnerable children and make their education worse by taking away their support, taking away their opportunities and taking away their inclusion? The council claims by putting these children in a mainstream nursery is inclusive. How? Because they're together? I, an English man that speaks no other languages, could be put in a room full of Germans, speaking said German, but I wouldn't feel included. I'd feel lost, not have a clue what was being said and almost certainly wouldn't want to go back.

I'd also like to argue the point that Oakham C of E has said they can take children of reception age in the DSP (Designated Specialist Provision). Whilst the school has a classroom and shared access across the school with The Parks, what's to say they can meet the needs of EVERY reception aged child with SEN in the DSP? The offer in The Parks is still different with smaller groups, children of THEIR age and an inclusive curriculum of their age appropriate level. As I'm sure you know, there have been many special schools in the past which have said they can meet needs before 6 months down the line realising actually, that setting is not best for that child. The DSP is an equally fantastic environment which I will take nothing away from, but when there is a class with children aged from 4 to 8, is this really appropriate and inclusive for these children? Or would these 4 year olds be better having their needs met in The Parks with a curriculum more suited to their age, a classroom more tailored to their needs and while children of their age. To me, that says inclusion.

I personally feel there are many, many, many other points to make in support of keeping The Parks from closing. Such as there are no specialist staff in mainstream nurseries to support these children, SEN children having difficulties in accessing a mainstream curriculum or even the argument of 'will t** actually SAVE the council money' due to sending children out of county to have specialist education needs met.

These children don't have a voice for this matter. We are that voice. As someone that was failed by the councils approach to education, I do not, nor will not, lay down and listen to such proposals knowing how many children will suffer from these proposals.

Surely the fact that over 2000 people have signed a petition to keep The Parks from closing and it has even be covered on ITV News is enough evidence to suggest the people of Rutland DO NOT agree with this proposal?

I am more than happy to discuss any of this further should it be needed. However with any luck, the council will come to their sense and realise this idea is ludicrous and discriminatory as previously stated at the beginning of my email.

I would also be incredibly interested to know the number of emails sent to t** proposal with how many are against the closure of The Parks and how many are in favour, which I would assume from the public consultation, the coverage in ITV news and the outcry on social media, would be close to zero.

21/11/23 (second representation)

Thank you. There is one particular comment I would like to address in the consult Q and A. It states there are 11 children under the age of 5 with an EHC. From previous comments the

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	<p>council have said there are NO children that would benefit from The Parks. Surely these children could come to The Parks which would mean they would be OVERSUBSCRIBED.</p> <p>21/11/23 (third representation) I'm very much aware that under 5s refer to nursery and foundation age, but this is still 11 children which COULD access The Parks. You've also just said 'majority'... how much is majority? And majority still isn't ALL. That still leaves some which would benefit from a special education setting.</p> <p>It can be made clearer but regardless of it they are nursery age or foundation age they are still able to attend The Parks, and for some this may be the better option rather than DSP. Whilst the DSP at Oakham C of E is excellent, it isn't suitable for all children just because they have an EHC.</p> <p>** Identifying personal details redacted</p>
24	<p>07/11/23</p> <p>My connection to the Parks is that I have a deeply held moral belief that education is a basic human right, and it is the responsibility of a civilised society to care for its most vulnerable, which OFSTED recognise the Parks is "outstanding" in so doing. I also work in an additional needs school and previously worked in nurseries and I've seen how the importance of existing provisions. Nurseries are not set out to provide support that is being asked of them and private nurseries are still run in a way to make money...something that I fear could get in the way of getting support for the most vulnerable. The parks has also helped ** to thrive in mainstream/special needs schools.</p> <p>I object to the proposed closure of The Parks on the following grounds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I believe that there are children for whom The Parks is an essential provision, because they would simply not be able to cope in mainstream nurseries, even with additional support. This will have an enormous negative impact on the children themselves, because children will miss out on early intervention which could help their development.• I do not believe that mainstream nurseries have the skills, expertise, experience or facilities in house to meet the needs of highly complex and disabled children, particularly those with significant physical disabilities, who need highly adapted communication environments, extremely small class sizes.• I believe that the cost of supporting these children in mainstream nurseries will cost more than educating them in the Parks, because they will require expensive additional equipment, changes to the environment, and specialist support staff. It will cost the council less to support these children together in a small group in The Parks, where they can share specialised staffing and equipment.• I believe that the evidence is that early intervention for children with SEND is vital, and for some, the intensive, specialist intervention that The Parks can offer them cannot be replicated within mainstream provision.• I do not believe that in the long run, closing The Parks will save council money, as without this important early, intensive intervention, more children will end up needing specialist schools, which will mean sending even more children out of county to get the support they need.

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- I believe the challenging behaviour that would be seen from disabled children who are struggling to cope in mainstream provision would be distressing both for them and those around them, having a negative impact on everyone, and potentially place all children at risk.
- I believe that for many of these children, they would not be able to form meaningful relationships with their age-peers because their developmental levels are so different. In order not to feel isolated, they need to be with those with similar needs to them.
- I believe there are children with disabilities who need The Parks because their needs will not be fully met mainstream Reception classes, even those in the DSP and will need specialist provision. If the Parks were kept open, it could be adapted to provide this provision, and therefore include more children.
- I do not believe that children who need The Parks would be able to access a mainstream curriculum, even if it is highly differentiated, without being isolated and marked out from their peers.
- I believe that within a mainstream environment, they would be included “in name only” in reality leading almost a parallel experience to their mainstream peers, and gaining little if any benefits from being around non-disabled peers.
- I do not think it morally right to reduce specialist provision for the most profoundly disabled and vulnerable children, so that more can be spent on those who’s needs are such that they are able to access mainstream.
- I do not agree that at a time where across the country other counties are building more special school places, that Rutland should be reducing the special school places. I do not understand why Rutland is different to every other county in that it does not have any children who need specialist education in reception.
- I do not accept that all parents with children with the complex needs for which The Parks caters would prefer their children educated in mainstream nurseries or in the designated specialist provision, and I believe in parental choice as per the code of practice.
- I believe that if The Parks closes, more parents will go to tribunal to get specialist provision for their children, which will incur additional legal costs to Rutland County Council.
- I believe that rather than a falling demand for the sort of “outstanding” education The Parks provides, it has instead been made harder and harder for parents to access. For many years, The Parks was oversubscribed, and has accommodated 13 children in the past.
- I do not feel that all the options for making the Parks viable have been fully explored, including but not limited to;
 - o facilitating quicker access for those children who’s needs have not been fully diagnosed
 - o facilitating access for those children with significant needs who have not yet completed the EHCP process
 - o expanding provision to include KS1
 - o using the facilities and staff in the holidays to provide more cost-effective respite care for

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	<p>children with disabilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I do not think it right that young, highly vulnerable and disabled children should have to be bussed out of county to access specialist support. Aside from their welfare, it is expensive and not environmentally friendly.• At a time when other local authorities are investing in more special school places, I object that Rutland County Council are reducing their provision. <p>I have grave concerns over this proposal – on financial, practical and moral grounds, both for the children and families whom The Parks serves, and the wider community. I therefore object in the strongest possible terms to the proposal, and I urge Rutland County Council in the strongest possible terms to pursue strategies which would make The Parks viable without closing it or reducing the provision that it is able to offer.</p> <p>** Identifying personal details redacted</p>
25	<p>8/11/23</p> <p>I am very sad about the proposed closure of the The Parks School and hope that the plans for this can be reconsidered</p> <p>I used to be a member of staff at The Parks and have seen first hand the difference the specialised staff and environment can make to the children who through no fault of their own need so much more support to find their way in life.</p> <p>I have seen children arrive who were considered to be on the path of special school, make so much progress, cognitively, emotionally and behaviourly, that the need to go go down that path has changed. The early specialised interventions that are put in place can be individual to each child, and adapted quickly if needs be. They are able to be in a safe environment that can cater to behavioural issues without judgement, something that is equally important to parents.</p> <p>Those other children who continue on to Special School obviously have needs beyond what their named primary school could offer so obviously have needs beyond what the usual early years setting can provide. I know that over the years the Early Years settings have vastly improved with coping with children with additional needs but The Parks is a place for those children who may well have been down that route and it hasn't worked or whose needs are more extreme from the beginning.</p> <p>The parents also receive the support and understanding that The Parks gives which is invaluable to them. They are able to get advice at a time when life may be incredibly stressful, at a time when they may well be grieving for the child, the life, the future that they had envisaged for their child and family. There they are given hope without judgement, not always easy to find.</p> <p>I find it hard to believe that there you feel there are insufficient children to warrant keeping this amazing school available to those who need it. We saw many times in the past numbers at the start of a school year drop but within a few weeks new children arriving and suddenly been up to full capacity.</p> <p>This school is about community, supporting those families who need more for their child than they could ever have expected and certainly did not wish for .The opportunity of receiving</p>

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	<p>what The Parks can offer can, or could, be the make or break factor to those families staying together and their mental health as only people who have been in that situation, and to a degree those who work with those families, can fully understand. I hope the people making this decision can put their hand on their heart and say that if this unique and fantastic resource - The Parks School -is to close that they are sure that the alternative for these families will as good if not better for those that need it.</p> <p>Its one of those things, who never know who that will be but I know if it was any of my family, or friends family who found themselves in that situation, it The Parks that I would want them to go to.</p> <p>Sometime we just need to look at what is the right thing to do, not allowing money to dictate and how we should to be a caring supporting world.</p>
26	<p>8/11/23</p> <p>In terms of my relationship to The Parks I do not have one however I do work in Early years within Rutland.</p> <p>I object to the proposed closure of The Parks on the following grounds:</p> <p>For me as an early years professional I recognise the need to be inclusive but when speaking about children with complex needs it is not always possible to give them the best education in a mainstream environment that does not have access to appropriate facilities or specialist training. In terms of mainstream nurseries and other early years settings taking on what the Council proposes is no children (there are children that need The Parks school but the council is ignoring that) I do not feel it is feasible given the strain the Early Years sector is under and the massive recruitment issue that is happening locally – many of the local nurseries already do not have enough staff so how will they be able to provide children with complex needs the level of care they require and frankly deserve. Not only is my concern to do with lack of staff it is also lack of funding how will nurseries and other early years settings cover the cost of providing for a child or multiple children with complex needs when as a council you are already decreasing funds for SEND children. I do not believe that in the long run, closing The Parks will save council money, as without this important early, intensive intervention, more children will end up needing specialist schools, which will mean sending even more children out of county to get the support they need. It is not fair to families of these children or the children that the council is considering shipping these young children off to other counties. On that point it is neither cost effective to do so or environmentally friendly.</p> <p>As someone that has worked with a child with complex needs and someone who currently works in the early years I believe the evidence is that early intervention for children with SEND is vital, and for some, the intensive, specialist intervention that The Parks can offer them cannot be replicated within mainstream provision. I am also concerned that the challenging behaviour that would be seen from disabled children who are struggling to cope in mainstream provision would be distressing both for them and those around them, having a negative impact on everyone, and potentially place all children at risk. I equally do not agree that all parents want their children in mainstream as they themselves know that is not in the best interests of the child but where will they go if The Parks is closed.</p> <p>From what I have heard I think the council has been avoiding and delaying children having access to The Parks meaning that it looks to outsiders like no child in Rutland need The Parks however that is categorically incorrect and through talking to other early years providers I know of at least 50% of the space the parks provide would be full in 2024. At a time when other local authorities are investing in more special school places, I object that Rutland County Council are reducing their provision.</p>

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	<p>Have any of the council members in charge of this decision even spoken to families and spent any time caring for these children? (you claim you have spoken to families and early years settings but I am yet to see evidence of you doing so efficiently and as an early years provider in your county I can confirm that I have not been spoken to).</p> <p>I have grave concerns over this proposal – on financial, practical and moral grounds, both for the children and families whom The Parks serves, and the wider community. I therefore object in the strongest possible terms to the proposal, and I urge Rutland County Council in the strongest possible terms to pursue strategies which would make The Parks viable without closing it or reducing the provision that it is able to offer.</p>
27	<p>8/11/23</p> <p>It would seem that as a council. There is some very short sighted people proposing an agenda that they have no idea of. The need for the parks is still as great as ever if only you allowed them to run to capacity.</p> <p>As a former manager and senco of a main stream nursery that has offered lots of care for SEN children the parks offers care and education for children that cannot access main stream or if they do will be lost and unhappy due to the nature of how mainstream settings run in comparison. Having fought to get children places and EHCPs for the parks and offering dual placements. The best education and care these children got was most definitely with the parks and not my own setting. The curriculum they used was more tailor made to their needs which are diverse. We offered excellent parent support and care but the parks offered something beyond that.</p> <p>Staff are highly knowledgeable in mainstream but not always trained to the extent of those in the parks which will in the longrun have a detrimental effect on children.</p> <p>It will also have a knock on effect of the care offered to all the other children in the setting if staff are pulled away from their care and education.</p> <p>The parks is definitely an asset to the county and if allowed to run properly should be attracting children. Why spend money sending them out of country, costing even more when they can access the parks and hopefully filter into oakham c of e dsp unit. Saving money.</p> <p>I hope that all the views of those that actually know, are taken into consideration.</p>
28	<p>10/11/23</p> <p>As a teacher with 50 years' experience in special education, I write to express my deep concern following the news of the proposed closure of the Parks School. You cannot be unaware of the growing need for special education provision in the UK and of the long-term implications for children, their families and wider society entailed by any loss or reduction of such.</p> <p>Rutland should be at the forefront of creating more opportunities for children who have additional needs, rather than curtailing their life chances. It is incomprehensible that this retrograde step is being taken at a time of heightened understanding of the importance of special education and that this irreplaceable school faces closure.</p> <p>Rutland simply cannot afford to lose this dedicated specialist school. I urge everyone involved in this decision to carefully weigh the consequences and avoid the harm and distress that will inevitably follow the loss of the Parks School.</p>
29	<p>12/11/23</p> <p>My connection to the Parks is that my ** children are at the Oakham C of E School. We chose the school partly because of the Federation with The Parks School: we suspected that one of</p>

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my children might need additional support due to global developmental delays, and we knew that there was a wealth of expertise in SEN at the Federation.

I personally object to the proposed closure of The Parks on the following grounds: I believe that there are children for whom The Parks is an essential provision, because they would thrive in mainstream nurseries, even with additional support. Effective early intervention with SEN is crucial and I think the closure would remove that opportunity for children. Mainstream nurseries do not have the skills, expertise, experience or facilities in-house to support children with complex needs, whether cognitive, behavioural and/or physical. For instance, mainstream nurseries cannot provide very small group sizes or specifically adapted environments.

There is a non-negligible risk to the wellbeing and safety of non-SEN children, and staff, in the mainstream nurseries because staff will not be able to manage behavioural issues of some children with SEN which can manifest in physical or verbal abuse of other children and adults. It is clear that nurseries are already suffering from chronic underfunding, and most barely surviving financially. I do not think The Parks' budget, spread thinly across these settings, would be enough to remedy this. I am concerned that the extra pressure would harm staff, increasing staff turnover, and might tip nurseries into financial non-viability.

It seems to me morally wrong to reduce specialist provision for the most profoundly disabled and vulnerable children, so that more can be spent on those whose needs are lesser such that they are able to access mainstream education. It also seems morally wrong to remove parents' choice to explore specialist, non-mainstream support for their child(ren).

I doubt that the economic evaluation has accounted properly for the cost of supporting eligible children to the same standard as offered by The Parks, if these children are spread across a number of mainstream nurseries, especially with upfront costs of equipment and adaptations to facilities, plus funding specialist support staff. It seems likely that The Parks closure may incur costs to health and social care and more widely at a later stage in these children's lives because they have been denied the appropriate level of early intervention. For example, if children later need to be transported out of county to specialist schools.

** Identifying personal details redacted

30 13/11/23

I am currently **. During this time I have been able to work with numerous children with special educational needs and disabilities, as well as being able to offer support to their families.

As mentioned by the council 'there are very few examples of this type of provision elsewhere in the country' - surely this is something that Rutland should be proud of and ensure the continuation of The Parks.

I have been able to see the importance of this school and the huge benefit for our young children starting their educational journey. They are able to access play and learning in a much quieter environment which is best suited to their individual needs, which then enables them to make good progress. Not all young children are able to thrive in busy noisy environments. Surely all children, including our youngest and those with special educational needs and disabilities deserve the best possible start to their education.

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	<p>Although no nursery age children are presently attending this setting, there are, and will be children currently attending nurseries around the county who would greatly benefit from attending The Parks School.</p> <p>Surely Rutland County Council should continue to provide this much needed special nursery provision which the whole county can be proud to support. Do not make the mistake of losing this facility and all that it offers to our children and families in the community now and for those to come in the future.</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
31	<p>14/11/23</p> <p>First of all I would just like to say I am not a resident of Rutland but of Melton Mowbray however I know families in Rutland as I have ** Send Children who attend Birch Wood School.</p> <p>Your proposal to shut The Parks School is shocking to me as a parent, it is such a huge support to families who have a child with SEND with no or little support, as we all know the purse string for support are extremely limited.</p> <p>My story in Melton, which I doubt is unusual country wide, is that I have a now **year old child with autism and Global Development Delay and PICA. ** started at a mainstream pre-school when he was 2. ** cried every day for the whole time **was there - for 4 months. Eventually the pre school asked me not to bring **back any more! At this time there was also no SEND pre school provision in Melton **could attend either. As a parent it is soul destroying knowing there is nowhere to place your child where they will be happy and safe. I mean surely they have the right to learn like every other child! This will now be the reality for all the families now and in the future in Rutland.</p> <p>The emphasis at Rutland council worryingly seems to be on getting SEND children into mainstream education, where I'm afraid for many young people this is just not appropriate, each child should be given the education they deserve. I'm so thankful my** are having a fantastic education that is catered exactly around their needs in a calm setting, not just dumped in a loud mainstream because it's cheaper and closer to home.</p> <p>Poor Rutland children. I hope in time like the rest of the UK you will be decided to invest in SEND provision, not take it away.</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
32	<p>17/11/23</p> <p>I have been aware of the plans for closure for some time, and I have a clear understanding of the funding issues that we as a council face, however whilst we have a great school offering it would appear that this decision to close fails to consider several important points</p> <p>Where will those children that clearly can't manage in main stream go and at what financial cost</p> <p>What will the impact to the children having to travel? What is our role for children? It should be to give the best start in life?</p> <p>What is the impact on the wider family, financially, mentally, and socially?</p> <p>Long term costs balance against short term saving does this make sense?</p> <p>Who are we here to support the SEND side of school is at braking point, not enough capacity to help in early years, not enough capacity in secondary school, I know students who have travelled all the way through our schooling system and gone onto University for them to be</p>

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	<p>diagnosed with Dyslexia, what would have been the outcome if we had the support in place earlier?</p> <p>Are we failing a few to make ends meet? Are we making the route in to complicated? EHCP's hoops to get through.</p> <p>If we expanded the offer and had children from neighboring areas could it be better use of funds?</p> <p>Please think very carefully about the reasons and if we save some money will this be put back into the system to train additional staff to support those displaced, to enable them to thrive in a main stream setting, support them with all needs dietary, educationally and emotionally.</p>
33	<p>17/11/23</p> <p>I am writing to you to express my concerns over the recent decision to close Parks School.</p> <p>We have moved to Oakham in **, therefore we are a new resident in the area. Our reason for moving to this area was to be specifically in the blue light zone for Leicester Royal Hospital, there are two articles written about us, one explaining how severe our previous county was lacking the understanding, knowledge and resources for our **</p> <p>The reasons I am writing to you as a mother of a child with additional needs is that we have fought ** entire life to achieve support for ** and ourselves. We've upped and moved our lives not once, but twice having to live in London just to ensure **gets the right healthcare which actually in turn, saved ** life. Dare I say it, mine too. There is no way I'd of coped having a baby born that was unable to survive due to lack of quick thinking and proper healthcare. As a mother who has frantically and tirelessly fought to ensure we have the right support around us I am devastated to hear that a school ** would have know doubt of been going too is now closing.</p> <p>We moved here under the circumstances that we could sleep easy knowing we had the resources to ensure a smooth and safe upbringing of **after the hideous start we had to being SEN parents.</p> <p>Parks school is just a short walk away from our business which we have also upped and moved to Oakham. Our entire life has been moved here after research and deep thought into this huge risk we made as a family. To hear that this school is closing when ** could have gone here is something of a disaster in our eyes. As a mother who has seen ** fight for her life not once, but three times. I could have relaxed about her being in a safe and understanding setting just around the corner from me whilst I work.</p> <p>We are business owners in Oakham and also residents, we have specifically moved here to access what we felt was a fantastic school for ** along with the amazing healthcare we receive in this postal code.</p> <p>We cannot see this school close without showing you our need for the place to remain open. I need the support with **, I need ** to be safe and cared for in an environment in which ** can be equal.</p> <p>Somebody with ** goes their entire life being looked at, stared at, discriminated against, ignored so much so there are many documentaries on television about it. Discriminating facts such as "do not resuscitate" notes being put on their medical files should they ever get the super strains Covid-19. From the moment of them being in the womb, they are disregarded by humankind as "abnormalities"</p>

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	<p>I am just about sick and tired of people, those of whom disregard this school as no longer important in the community and suggest to close it. It is SO needed. Non of us know when we may have a child with additional needs, it just happens sometimes. You could have a perfectly smooth pregnancy and birth of a child to later uncover they need special care. These are our family, our friends and not just my kid, this can happen to anybody around us which is why this school is the most important school in the community because it is community.</p> <p>I have recently seen a ridiculous article in the Stamford news about Rutlands council giving away FREE bus rides to encourage Christmas shopping over the month of December, is that a waste of money that could of been used to save this school? Budgets can't be that tight.</p> <p>What disgusts me is that parks school has an outstanding ofsted report, they are the rarest reports to find!!! What peace it would have brought me to of sent my daughter here.</p> <p>** We are working on ** EHCP as we speak. I work three days a week, deducting our nanny's wage from my own salary so I know ** is safe and looked after. ** cannot go to a mainstream nursery, we tried. ** managed four days before we were blue lighted to A&E at midnight, ** had contracted three viruses. Common colds and a sick bug. Typical children would fight this off naturally, yet I sit with ** in a&e alone - my new baby at home with ** dad, I sit there and I remember the rushed mothers taking their kids to nursery full of colds and flus, thinking nothing of it because they have to work.</p> <p>** The reason parks school differs is because all of the parents are aware of these extra needs, they know some kids are more vulnerable than others. Teachers are trained to notice when ** is unwell, they know to call me and don't put it off because I'm at work and nursery is just childcare. Nursery is not childcare to me, nursery is an essential developmental help to **. It's a requirement that we go to work to earn money back from the costs of ** healthcare as a baby, funding the hotels ourselves in London as the hospital would only accommodate **.</p> <p>We have fought since the moment we became aware that our unborn baby had special needs and we will fight until the end for her. We are exhausted.</p> <p>** Identifying personal details redacted</p>
34	<p>17/11/23</p> <p>I am disgusted hear that you are closing the school when there is a great need and children are being turned away saying that it will be closed before it is ratified!! Think of the effect on the children and also the parents who need the support. I think this should be a top priority. Have you actually been directly involved and actually seen what these families have to cope with every day?? Yours Prayerfully</p>
35	<p>17/11/23</p> <p>Thank you for allowing me to comment on the proposal to close the Parks School in Oakham. My qualification to speak **</p> <p>I note the statements regarding the reasonings for the closure and consider these to be fundamentally flawed by error and manipulation of facts, and that therefore the proposal is not valid.</p> <p>That the school is not needed due to lower numbers on the role. This figure has been manipulated by officers. Officers have made conscious and publicly obvious efforts to discourage parents and carers from applying for places at the school. This is not “urban myth” – parents have come forward to state that this is the case and that they have been placed</p>

under firm and improper pressure to not apply for thi school for their children. It is anticipated that a number of those affected will contribute to this “consultation”. This may have been because of failing to fully understand the forthcoming guidance (some of which is quoted at the end of this contribution).

That it is right to share the SEN funding equitably between children. **This is a nonsense in principle** as children have varying levels and types of need which will require varying types and degrees of support. As such it will never be possible to have equitable distribution of SEN funding – unless some children are given more care than they need, and some are left to suffer less care than they need. Is this what RCC is proposing to do?

That each child “costs” £30k compared to £12 k elsewhere. **This figure is a misrepresentation of fact and impact.** **A, The fact** is that by discouraging numbers on the role the fixed overheads have had to be shared between a smaller number of children thereby creating the impression that the cost per child “must be” so high. This figure has only been reached by the improper pressure placed on parents and carers to not apply – thereby reducing numbers on the role thereby increasing average fixed cost per child. This is entirely a matter of officers’ own making and is not implicit in the running of the special school. Increasing numbers on the role will reduce the average cost per child (it is noted that variable costs rise on a stepped basis dependant on carer-per-child ratio requirements). **B The impact** of closing the school will not “save” £18k per child as the proposal might be read as implying. The truth is that all the fixed costs of the school will remain and will be carried by another budget. It is further the case that those children who cannot be supported in mainstream settings (and it is a known as fact that such children exist withing Rutland) will have to be transported out of County at the Council’s cost to settings that are distant from the children’s family and support networks. Transporting children out-of-county is already a serious budget issue for the council, and closing the Parks School will only exacerbate that problem with further increased costs.

That OFSTED will not issue an “outstanding” verdict in Rutland if this proposal does not go forward. I refer in this matter to the SEN and alternative provision improvement plan March 2023 which is quoted below. Ignoring for a moment the loss of confidence in OFSTED which appears to be in disarray – **the responsibility of the Council is to ensure best outcomes for the children** for whom it is responsible. The matter of how that is graded by an outside body is at best a moot point, being an indicator only and not being the objective of any policy. The best outcomes for our children must be the overarching measure of the policies that go forward rather than pleasing third parties.

That all children should be in mainstream settings. I refer again to the SEN and alternative provision improvement plan March 2023 which is quoted below .**Implicit in this is the word “inclusive” The leader of the council has used the word “integrated” This IS NOT THE WORD USED BY GOVERNMENT.** Children at the Parks School already meet the requirement as they are treated in an inclusive way attending both assemblies and performances and other events as applicable to them. Children from the C of E school are encouraged to engage with children at the Parks School. It is appreciated t** was not found to be the case in all (or indeed many) schools that were visited as part of the initial research for the report, however the failing of other schools should not impact on the Parks School and the Oakham C of E School which have successfully created t** “inclusion” partnership as required under forthcoming guidance.

Summary: Officers have made a clear, obvious and concerted effort to “run down:” the Parks School by pressuring parents and carers to not apply. This may be a result of misinterpretation of the forthcoming guidance This has manipulated the figures for attendance and thereby the average cost per head. This is easily reversible by keeping the Parks School open and increasing the number on the role - this would be in the best interest

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of children now and in the future by giving the greatest opportunity to achieve best outcomes - which should be the over-riding objective of the Council. As it happens this is likely in the best interest of the Council by avoiding further pressure on the transport costs to out-of-county placements.

SEN and alternative provision improvement plan March 2023

Para 11 page 8

For children and young people, this means they will be able to access and regularly attend the most appropriate early years setting, school or college for their needs – *be this mainstream or specialist*

Para 13 Page 8

Critically, we agree with what we heard during the consultation; that the national system should be co-produced with families, children and young people so we can build their confidence that the system will meet their needs quickly and effectively

Para 21 page 11

Longer-term placements to support return mainstream (question – how do you have long term placements if you close the alternative provision?)

Annexe C page 96

Alternative provision taskforces will help deliver wraparound support in alternative provision in schools (question - so why close it if it is in the guidance?)

Online reference

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63ff39d28fa8f527fb67cb06/SEND_and_alternative_provision_improvement_plan.pdf accessed 17/11/2023

36

18/11/23

This must be the most stupid badly thought out proposal you ever came up with.

Clearly you have no idea how difficult it is for a child with SEN, physical or mental disability or other complex needs to cope with even going to a "normal" nursery or a "normal" school.

I remind you that the Parks looked after children born to military nurses & serving military who had served in Iraq - BABIES BORN WITH NO EYES !

Im old enough to remember babies born victims of thalidomide. How do you expect a child with no limbs to attend "normal" nursery or "normal" school? Just because thalidomide stopped being used does not stop disabled children being born.

Then you have babies brain damaged at birth. Really - go to "normal" nursery? Go to "normal" school? or the staff at this place have proper training to deal with a child who is not just doubly incontinent but also terrified of loud noises i.e other children !

Then you have children on the "so-called" spectrum and that usually means not able to cope with crowds, loud noises, bright lights etc. Oh and other children ! These are children who may be highly intelligent but also totally unable to do "normal" things and may go fetal under a table or bang their head against a wall just to shut out the noise they

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	<p>can hear that most people cant hear - or pick up chemical smells form people that make them fearful, upset, anxious.</p> <p>If they dont get the right care and the right support physically & mentally they will grow up to be depressed suicidal and worse.</p> <p>And you insane people think that the current teachers can provide all this extra care when schools are already oversubscribed & you keep giving permissionfor more new houses attracting more people with kids who need mainstream school ND SPECIAL SCHOOLS like The Parks.</p> <p>Go away and think PROPERLY and find the money to keep open this vital asset.</p> <p>And YES ** with autism is suicidal due to not getting proper support in secondary school of college. And due to not finding out ** dyslexia problem until ** was ** & then having that only done PRIVATELY !</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
37	<p>18/11/23 <i>Personal details only provided</i></p>
38	<p>19/11/23</p> <p>I have worked in the parks and have since moved to another area of the country and have worked in several other SEND provisions - NOTHING like the parks, The parks is by far the best place and does the best work with the children they have. I saw more results from the children in the parks than I have seen in any other early years setting for children with SEND.</p> <p>If you choose to close (the wrong choice) the parks school you will be closing the best provision you have for SEND children.</p> <p>For a council with no other SEND provision to be closing the only provision they have is Despicable ! If only there could be other parks all over the country.</p> <p>You should be using it as a place to set the standards for SEND early years provisions.</p>
39	<p>20/11/23</p> <p>I wish to add my name to the closure of The Parks School. I have no one who attends the school but I urge not to close it. I became aware of it by handing of leaflets outside Tesco store in Oakham. Please don't shut it.</p>
40	<p>20/11/23</p> <p>I am emailing you to express my concern over the proposal to integrate Parks School into a state Primary School.</p> <p>** worked at the Parks School for over 20 years and I find it difficult to believe there is not a need for a school for children with special needs.</p> <p>From the Warnock Report onwards, there have been cries to integrate special need children into main stream education and these children have suffered as a result.</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
41	<p>21/11/23 <i>Received via text</i></p> <p>I think the parks is so important because the little ones need their lovely friendship to be with friends feel safe and be happy friendship is important and a mainstream setting could be terrible children who are disabled or autistic often get bullied and don't have any friends</p>

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	<p>That happened to me as little girl when I was with mainstream children in the 1980s and I don't want it to happen to children today because it still does I've seen little girl left out at mainstream school it's horrible the parks school was the only one I felt safe in at that time please don't take it away from them they will have no Friends and get bullied possibly please listen</p> <p>I'm also concerned as to what happens to children with disability when they are too old to go to the parks as it now only goes up to five years old I am concerned that there are too many children struggling in mainstream schools and classes it breaks my heart to see a child being bullied or just playing by themselves in a corner or wandering around because they have no friends I have learning disabilities and anxiety and that happened to me as a little girl and it still seems to be happening to kids now having a teacher sit next to you in class isn't much good when you are out in the playground getting ignored or called names it's just so cruel and it doesn't seem to be going away sorry but please listen</p>
42	<p>21/11/23</p> <p>Having spent my professional career in Early Years Training and now, retired and living in Oakham, I note with interest your consultation on the Parks School. The residents of Rutland obviously have a very special facility here for children with extreme special needs. The Ofsted rating reflects the expertise of the staff and the progress of the children in their care. It also reflects the value of a beautiful modern purpose-built building, including the facility of a swimming pool and the ability for the children to be in contact with students from the adjoining Primary School.</p> <p>Even though the present children will not be affected, I feel it would be a great mistake to lose this facility for future children in our county.</p> <p>I do appreciate, however, that we must live in the real world and that, particularly at this time, cost is one of the core elements that RCC cannot disregard. As I understand it, at present the school is under used being only attended by 2 children. I imagine that the criteria for getting into the school is quite specific, with children probably needing to be statemented before being allotted a place. This is often a slow process for families and statements are not lightly given.</p> <p>There are, however, many children in the county who have special needs integrated into our primary schools.</p> <p>Is there some way of redefining the remit of the Parks School so that it can cater for a wider range of children, perhaps on a sessional basis?</p> <p>Is there a possibility of widening the scope of the staff as a support system for staff in mainstream education who educate children with diverse needs?</p> <p>As there are only 6 nursery schools of this type in the county, could spare places be offered to out-of-county children to make use of the school and staff and provide extra income for RCC?</p> <p>Over the past few years, and especially with the pandemic, children and their education seem to have suffered adversely. Even though the general population of Rutland is on the older side I think it is very important to prioritise the needs of the young and future generations.</p> <p>I have no links with the Park School.</p>

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43	<p><i>21/11/23 phone call</i></p> <p>It wont affect me as my children and grandchildren are grown up but I am worried about where these children will go. We seem to be losing all our education for those who are not academic.</p>
44	<p><i>21/11/23</i></p> <p>I was horrified to learn that RCC is proposing the closure of The Parks Special School in Oakham.</p> <p>This school’s status has been granted Outstanding by Ofsted and serves local children who cannot be integrated easily into mainstream state nursery and primary schools in Oakham.</p> <p>With regard to RCC’s objectives as outlined in your Corporate Strategy, it states you fully support equality, diversity and inclusion.</p> <p><i>Quote:</i> <i>Young people of all abilities will have the benefit of a positive and inclusive education, so that they can learn, do well and realise their ambitions.</i></p> <p><i>Rutland will be a county where everyone can reach their full potential.</i></p> <p>How can you, therefore, justify closing The Parks School?</p> <p>Those children certainly will NOT be reaching their full potential if they have to travel further away from their homes or integrate into other state schools. They would NOT be catered for as you state in your Corporate Strategy -the need for inclusive education- this is best provided for by the school they currently attend, which is outstanding.</p> <p>Is it simply a matter of funding? If so it would be really interesting for Rutlanders to know how much we are spending on the salaries of the Chief Executive and Senior Staff at RCC.</p> <p>Maybe a cut in salaries to help local children with SEN, complex needs and disabilities would be a solution?</p> <p>I would welcome your comments.</p>
45	<p><i>21/11/23</i></p> <p>My husband and I have lived at this address for ** years. I have been grateful to have had no personal family need for what the Parks offers but over time as a local I have heard of families whose young children and parents have been supported by the school. We are now all aware of the importance of care for the first years of a child's life and while main stream primary schools have certainly developed their knowledge of youngsters with extra special needs in order to help them, I believe the Parks School must offer that little bit extra for these sensitive children. I am sure the Parks School should survive.</p>
46	<p><i>22/11/23</i></p> <p>Please register my disquiet at the proposed closure of the Parks special needs school, which has been of enormous benefit to Rutlanders who need that specialised schooling over many many years.</p>

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	<p>I have no relationship, past or present, with the school other than as a concerned citizen of Rutland. The county I moved to when I was ** and am now ** – nearly a local. But I am aware of several old pupils of The Parks who benefited greatly from its presence and availability. Please reconsider the proposal to close.</p>
47	<p>22/11/23 I am writing to object to the closure of the Parks School.</p> <p>It is an essential school for children with many developmental disorders who would simply not cope in mainstream education.</p> <p>If one were to look solely at the financial implication of running such a school then, logically it should be expanded to facilitate taking on older children who are failing in mainstream education facilities who too have developmental disorders, surely out of area referrals would create a financial gain? from nearby councils, such as South Kesteven, Melton Mowbray. I appreciate that the correct numbers of staffing would need to be factored in with the necessary skill set, however surely a national call for suitable educators could be found? Rutland being a very attractive place to live.</p> <p>Please rethink this short sighted closure plan.</p>
48	<p>22/11/23 (first representation)</p> <p>Where do I even begin with my response to the consultation ... I'll start with my personal story for context.</p> <p>** was diagnosed with a rare genetic condition at the age of ** years & ** months, the geneticist said the main thing we could do to help our ** was early intervention to help ** reach ** potential, whatever that potential may be.</p> <p>**</p> <p>We had a lovely health visitor in Rutland who was extremely supportive and saw **- ** suggested we stop comparing ** to other children as it was not helpful and I can't thank her enough for that kindness. Our inclusion officer tried to push us to put ** into a mainstream nursery setting, when I asked if any nurseries were fully trained on makaton the response was that some of them should at least know some - would you drop an Italian child into a uk nursery and just expect them to be ok? No! I also wasn't happy that they would be able to give ** the medical or emotional support that ** needed to be safe. No mention was made of The Parks School. So we stayed at home and accessed baby groups when we could.</p> <p>It took a few months for me to be convinced to go to sunflowers support group as I wasn't sure we would fit in - I adore ** just as ** is but it can be difficult as a new parent to accept that your child is different and the future is very different to what you expected. It was at sunnies that a parent told me her son was at The Parks School and it was actually in the same building. The Speech and language therapist who supported us because of my **regular choking suggested that the parks would be perfect for ** - **would get all the early intervention he needed including regular speech therapy to try to help him eventually speak.</p> <p>Sunflowers arranged for me to speak with the Senco, we then arranged to have a visit to the school and on that visit we just knew it was the right place **</p> <p>**started part-time at The Parks ** and it became apparent that ** needed a huge amount of adult support and a personalised transition plan to gradually increase **hours, fitting this around operations and recovery times.</p>

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The Parks team are amazing. They really cared for ** and also for us as a family. We knew ** was safe there and that staff would contact us if there were any concerns. When you have a child with a disability who is preverbal and needs constant 1:1 attention it's very difficult to find anyone able to take care of them, so not only did The Parks look after **, but because we knew ** was safe it meant we could actually relax a little and essentially have some respite - which was very much needed given how he doesn't like to sleep!

The Parks team are quite frankly remarkable. They didn't just look after ** they cared for ** and helped ** to flourish in ways we didn't dream possible. We always felt so involved with everything at school and loved seeing photos and hearing the stories of things they'd been doing. I still laugh at the thought of ** sticking green play doh on ** keyworkers face and trying to say bogeys.

We can never thank them enough for everything they did not only for our gorgeous ** but also for us as a family. The support they gave me saved me on many occasions. I remember a staff member running out to the car park to check I was ok after drop off because they thought I looked upset .. they really do go above and beyond for the whole family.

If it hadn't have been for The Parks ** wouldn't have attended nursery, instead we would have been trying all the interventions on our own at home until he was old enough to look for a specialist placement out of county. The parks helped us secure an EHCP, then developed ** confidence and abilities to such a degree that ** was able to stay at a specialist unit attached to a mainstream primary where he lives.

Without the early support from The Parks team ** wouldn't have coped in the unit. ** now has friends he can see out of school and feels like part of ** community. I worry more about ** options for secondary school as that is where our county seems to be lacking for SEN children sadly.

The support we received from The Parks and a local support group had such an impact on our lives **. I find it very difficult to put into words just what The Parks means to my family as it has so many feelings uattached to it, it became like a second family to us and we will be forever grateful to them.

From a financial viewpoint ** I fully understand the need to balance the books. However, what is being proposed by RCC doesn't do this long term. Had The Parks school not been there for ** he would have gone straight to an out of county special school when he was old enough - so the council has saved lots of money on expensive out of county specialist primary age placement and transport costs.

The proposal to close The Parks looks like a short term gain to satisfy the Delivering Better Value project. It has been stated in the proposal that closing The Parks isn't about money.

On one hand RCC say the money saved on The Parks will be spread amongst the other settings to improve inclusivity, yet on the Q&As it states '£250,719 - This money will not be taken away from the school but will be used to enhance the offer at Oakham Primary School. This will be done by increasing the number of places in the school's Designated Special Provision (DSP) from September 2024'

So which is it?

Are RCC really going to pay the DSP £250,719 to extend by 4 spaces? Or is this another error.

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Also, at the last early years working group meeting it was stated towards the end of the meeting that due to the improvements implemented so far there were no gaps to be seen except for communication - so if there are no gaps why take the money from The Parks to put into other nurseries or the DSP? (depending which line it is).

I am considering resigning from the early years and inclusion collaboration working groups for a number of reasons.

Reason 1 - The staff at the early years group kept raving on about how successful the SSP is and when a colleague of mine raised a family we are aware of that it isn't working for it was brushed under the carpet.

I am now personally having to support this family who's ** is on the verge of being excluded from a 2nd mainstream primary school to apply for an ehcp themselves. The current school has told them to look at alternative and specialist school provisions but without an ehcp they cannot get a space at a specialist school! The process is 20 weeks so what are they supposed to do in the meantime. An ehcp should have been applied for long ago, this child is in year ** and he was known to be struggling since nursery so why is it taking so long to actually help the children who desperately need it?

The family as a whole are suffering due to RCC letting them down. **

RCCs decisions have a huge impact on families not just the child with SEN and you are currently letting them down. The SSP is being used to look more 'attractive' than an ehcp therefore punishing families who actually need help and support. We are told that the nurture nest is only for children with attachment and trauma issues - what about the school based trauma you are inflicting on the children by forcing them to stay in the wrong environment. It is great to hear of the SSP successes and the children it is helping, but it needs to be recognised that the current system isn't working for everyone.

Reason 2 - at the 'Working together to support children and young people with SEND' event in April the group identified 4 initial areas to look at/improve on - collectively parents, RCC & other professionals.

1. Review of the Aiming High Short Breaks Criteria
2. How do we ensure good Early Years provision for all?
3. Special school provision
4. Ensuring all school staff have the skills to identify and support neurodiverse children and young people.

1&2 working groups to start June, 3&4 groups to start September.

I'm pretty sure the lack of specialist school provision was priority 1 or 2 based on votes in the in person event in the morning. And it wasn't just parents who voted for it. At the last early years group I asked why the meetings on the lack of specialist provision hadn't started yet as they were due to start in September.

The answer I got was

'Well it's never going to happen is it!' .. leaving me gobsmacked!

Then 'It's not on the political agenda' & 'nobody is building new specialist provisions'

So basically the working together only happens on the topics RCC want to work on and they ignore the other ones identified in collaboration?

I honestly feel so disappointed and for want of a better term let down. I genuinely wanted to work with the council to improve things for SEN children and families but when collaboration

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is a lie and just being used as a tick box to say 'we are working with parents' it is just not acceptable.

Reason 3 - at the consultation launch RCC staff member mentioned the collaboration groups and stated that parents had helped work on this pathway (of closing The Parks). However that is completely untrue! RCC staff member reassured the early years group at the meeting before the launch that The Parks proposal had absolutely nothing to do with our group! Apparently ** was supposed to come and apologise to parents at the last meeting however she didn't come and it was left to RCC staff member to apologise who wasn't even at the consultation launch.

The higher levels of RCC SEN staff just seem to not care at all or be completely incompetent.

Per proposal 'More choice and better support closer to home means we can invest more money into mainstream SEND support locally. Rutland's High Needs Funding can then be shared more equally among providers to widen the support available to a greater number of young children, leading to better outcomes for everyone.'

But by taking away The Parks you are giving LESS choice and support. No matter what alterations you propose to make to mainstream nurseries there will always be children that it still isn't suitable for. Where do they go?

If there is no Parks School they will either be at home until they are old enough for school (probably expensive out of county specialist), so not only do they miss out on early intervention and development skills it also means parents are unable to go to work.

Alternatively, they will be in an unsuitable environment causing harm to them and also to other children. Nurseries are struggling for staff and do not have the capacity to support more children with needs. I've been told that parents are already choosing to remove children from nurseries because they have been hurt by a child with needs when they've become dysregulated. Nurseries have already had Senif funding cuts this year so how is RCC giving them more support to help SEN children?

The term increased parental confidence keeps cropping up. A parents confidence has no impact on a child's actual needs, the needs are there no matter how a parent may feel about a setting. Trying to insinuate that parents only want The Parks school or other specialist provision because they are too worried is quite frankly insulting. Parents are the experts on their children and should be respected as such.

RCC staff have stated that all SEN parents just want specialist provision and see an EHCP as a golden ticket! Families want the correct provision to meet their child's needs whatever that might be. I personally want my **to be educated in an environment where ** feels safe, happy and with ** alike peers, where ** can feel ** own kind of 'normal' and be proud of ** achievements.

Sharing funding equally is a ridiculous aim - children will always have varying needs and therefore need varying amounts of funding and support. Fair isn't everyone getting the same thing, fair is everybody getting what they need in order to be successful. We want children to thrive not just survive!

When ** attended The Parks School ** didn't have an ehcp and there were waiting lists for spaces. The Parks helped us apply for an ehcp - I'm a relatively capable person but as a parent

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I would not have had the thought or capacity to apply for an ehcp when my sleep deprived focus was simply on surviving and keeping my child safe.

The requirement to have an EHCP to access the parks was put in place by RCC subsequently. Expecting parents to sort out an ehcp when they are struggling to come to terms with their child's needs and just trying to survive is both ludicrous and cruel. Especially when RCC is attempting to reduce the number of EHCPs it issues to children. If they can't get an EHCP how can they get a place?

Putting that barrier to entry in has stopped access and reduced numbers - intentionally to run The Parks down to close it?

The Parks also used to take children from out of county. This again was stopped.

The proposal states that RCC are not aware of any children needing The Parks. That is a ridiculous thing to say. Just because RCC are not aware of any children does not mean they do not exist. I am aware of a number of both nursery and school age children who do want to access the provision. I have also been told that a family were told not to consider The Parks because it would be closing - this was a year before the consultation launch! Very naughty!

Yet another family was advised not to consider The Parks this year as there weren't any nursery age children there - the children currently in the parks are aged under 5 and it is a setting that matches the provision to what children need so that is completely irrelevant and demonstrates RCCs intention to put families off using the Setting.

With all of the new housing developments bringing more families into the county there will more than likely be even more children with needs here. Obviously this can not be accurately predicted as a figure but as a common sense approach we know this is likely to be the case, especially when one family even moved to Rutland because of The Parks School.

** (sunflowers) run sessions once a week term time for 2 hours (including a swim in the hydrotherapy pool that was built as part of The Parks relocation) at Oakham C of E. (Sunflowers) are a completely self funded organisation and volunteers have a vast amount of SEN knowledge between them - as SEN parents, the head of the old The Parks school, former nursery school workers etc.

For many families *(sunflowers) are the only respite and support they can access. *(offer them a safe space and the opportunity to talk to others who are in a similar situation. Sunflowers are full and currently have a waiting list of 6 families needing support. We know that some of the families do want to access The Parks School and if councillors wish to speak to these families we are more than happy to ask them.

So the statement that there are no children under 5 with SEN needing The Parks is incorrect, and RCC have been told repeatedly that we are full and have a waiting list so should be aware that there is a need for The Parks.

RCC have made no attempt to make The Parks school viable. As *(involved in the early years pathway, after *(the initial shock of having the future of *(school questioned *(then became excited at the thought of being able to help and support even more families and children. *(came up with ideas of services The Parks could provide if it was not at full capacity (so had less than 7.5 Full time equivalent or 15 part time children on role) such as providing AET training, providing makaton and communication training, providing a portage service, providing a sensory equipment library, supporting nurseries & eyfs settings and

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parents with training on communication/behaviour/anxiety etc, outreach support, nursery staff shadowing sessions etc as stated in the minimum funding guarantee 2022-23 which was agreed on 29/3/22 with RCC.

** spent a huge amount of time and stress investing in the process and made many suggestions on how The Parks could be made viable but everything was ignored as RCC had set their minds on closing The Parks many years ago.

The comment from RCC staff was 'it's an LA school and if we want to close it we will!'

If that was always the intention then why waste all of our time and I dread to think how much money on consultants (that could have been used to help children!). I am frankly disgusted by how the whole thing has been handled.

The Parks community special school has been consistently rated outstanding by Ofsted which is not an easy thing to achieve. This is something that should be celebrated and capitalised on not just written off.

If you owned a restaurant that achieved a Michelin star would you just close if the number of customers started to drop .. NO! You would use other strategies to make it profitable like advertising, offers & take away services. Just closing an outstanding provision does not make any business sense.

If you want to make it viable there are many options. Here are a couple of suggestions

1/ remove the need for an ehcp to access (if RCC aren't giving them out anyway you would have to)

2/ allow out of county children access, you expect other counties to take our children so why not do the same? This would also bring revenue into the county

3/ facilitate a (paid?) holiday club in The Parks setting so that SEN children can actually access something in the school holidays. Parents are struggling to access any respite/childcare in holidays and there is a shortage of Personal Assistants (PAs)

4/ Build on the outstanding The Parks School good name and expand to a bigger specialist provision for a bigger age range. We need our own special school - this saves money on out of county specialist schools, travel costs, chaperone costs, in county independent specialist schools (e.g. the shires base price £80k-£90k per child per year so 30 spaces is £2.4 million per year - although this school is likely to be full from next academic year). If you had a suitable provision you may also be spending less on EOTAS packages and tribunals. It would also mean children can be part of their community amongst their ALIKE PEERS, and parents can actually take their own child to school. To name but a few benefits! Costs are only going to increase as specialist provisions in the closest counties to us are full therefore children will be forced to travel even further at an increased cost.

1023/23 - FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST shows that out of county placements are steadily increasing - 2021 100 children, 2022 128 children, 2023 144 children

Early intervention will save money in the long run.

The revised budget shows that RCC is predicting an increase in EOTAS costs, given that EOTAS is only awarded when there is no school available to meet a child's needs RCC are admitting that in the future there will be more children who have no suitable school. Surely it would

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make sense to at least attempt to pre-empt this and work with families to provide what is needed.

According to Leicester County Council the number of Rutland children placed at Birchwood special school has shown a steady increase - 21/22 13 children, 22/23 17 children, 23/24 24 children. This does not include any of their other council maintained specialist provisions, or independent specialist provisions or either of these in other counties - so I would suggest this trend is likely to continue. At what point will RCC realise that our own in county provision would be beneficial to everyone?

On a number of occasions I have heard RCC employees say that the government and the green paper want more mainstream inclusion, fewer ehcps and fewer special schools. This is not true. Yes it states that inclusion should be improved and that should happen anyway in a civilised society. It also states the intention to implement a national standardised ehcp format and a digitised format. It also states that more special schools are needed to meet demand. It says that a key measure set to be taken forward by government is the creation of thousands of places for children with SEND across 33 new special free schools - but of course Rutland didn't apply for special free school funding - why??!

Birchwood wanted to set up a special school hub in Rutland - RCCs response was no. RLT wanted to set up a specialist provision in Ketton - RCCs response was no. Willoughby wanted to set up a special school in Rutland - no!

At what point will the local authority stop having tunnel vision and realise that what the county and our children need is more specialist provision and not less.

The parks school is registered as a community special school with the department of education (it is not a nursery school) so please listen to the community.

The Parks school is always going to be an emotional subject and it's contribution to the community cannot be questioned. However, having the provision also makes financial sense if you look at the honest facts (not the manipulated numbers) and start letting families actually access what they need.

Councillors need to realise that parents believe saving The Parks is such a priority that we are potentially doing it at the cost of our own children's future journey. I know many parents who are too scared to say anything in case RCC look on their family less favourably. It shouldn't be like this.

22/11/23 (second representation)

Please can you clarify what the process is on the consultation?

What do you mean by responses will be considered?

What is the 'process' that Maureen Morris will be independently over-viewing?

How are responses to the consultation analysed and used to inform the final decision on the proposal?

So if Mr X sends an email then what happens? And how is this used to inform the decision?

Will councillors see all emails?

Will parts of emails be used (if so who decides which bits to ignore?)

Or is it just that a number of people have opposed?

I'd be really grateful if you could explain the full process

I've also cc'd in my ward councillors in case they already know the answer

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	<p>27/11/23 (third representation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can I ask what qualification Maureen holds in order for her to analyse that data and what type of analysis she is using? - And if she isn't using one, who is and what qualifications they hold? <p>28/11/23 (fourth representation)</p> <p>Please find attached a response to the Q&As RCC have prepared on the parks proposal consultation.</p> <p>We believe the answers RCC provided do not give the full picture and therefore have produced this response so the public and councillors can make a truly informed decision!</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
49	<p>22/11/23</p> <p>I do not have a relationship with the school.</p> <p>However is a concern that the closure of such a school with no alternative service offered could have a catastrophic impact on individual children.</p> <p>What a pity that this school has been chosen to bear the brunt of budget cuts.</p>
50	<p>22/11/23</p> <p>I wish to express my concerns around the proposed closure of The Parks School. As an Educational Psychologist in a neighbouring local authority, I have first-hand experience of the difficulties when it comes to placing Early Years children with SEND and sourcing appropriate provision. My concerns are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - removal of the Parks School will remove Rutland's only maintained specialist nursery provision. This means under 5s with SEND will be placed outside of county or in private provisions. With the recent government proposals to remove charitable status from private schools, the likelihood is it will cost the local authority more per pupil in fees than the existing notional funding. - children have a right to be educated in their local community. This is particularly important for pupils with SEND who are disproportionately disadvantaged from a social perspective to their peers. For pupils whose needs cannot be met at the DSP (or when that inevitably reaches capacity), vulnerably children will be forced away from their community. - RCC seem to be basing their decision on upcoming SEND trends for the 2024/25 cohort. There is no information on potential need for future cohorts and as early identification of SEND is improving, it seems short-sighted to close the school when there are likely to be pupils who would benefit from such a provision in the future. - equivalent specialist nurseries in neighbouring local authorities are heavily oversubscribed meaning pupils often have to be dual-registered in mainstream nurseries as there is not enough capacity to support them full-time. Closing the Parks School would compound this issue further. <p>I urge you to reconsider the school closure - there are other facilities in Rutland which are under-utilised yet remain open.</p>
51	<p>22/11/23</p> <p>The idea of closing The Parks School in Oakham, is the most stupid idea I have ever heard.</p>

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	<p>Children who need extra support/help and live in Oakham, The Parks School is the perfect School for these children.</p> <p>I have not needed to send my children to The Parks but I have friends who have sent their child/children there and there have spoken highly of The Parks.</p>
52	<p>23/11/23</p> <p>I became aware of The Parks School over that time, meeting with the then Principal **, an extremely dedicated woman with huge determination to improve the lives of children with disabilities.</p> <p>I worked with ** finding funding for a summer play scheme, which was successful. The Parks had also attracted funding from the Rutland Lions which enabled them to build a therapy pool for the children. I was then approached by a young group who wanted to take on a project and we met up with ** and discussed possibilities, the outcome of the meeting was they wanted to extend the building to provide a Parents Resource Centre. I was ** throughout this time. The aim was to make sure that parents could be supported by a wide range of services. Through their hard work and fund raising the Centre was opened by HRH The Princess Royal with councillors and local dignitaries attending - to bask in the glory, when they didn't contribute anything.</p> <p>I was aware that the Parks School was closed and incorporated into the new Oakham Primary School Build sometime ago.</p> <p>The next bombshell is that RCC now want to close this invaluable provision, shame on them! They say that they are committed to 'social inclusion', but clearly it is only when it suits them, they use community and voluntary when they can and abuse it when it suits them.</p> <p>In the main we learn from history but apparently the RCC does not. They should be ashamed at the way they have treated the voluntary, charitable and community sector over so many years. What a loss and so short-sighted.</p> <p>ALL our children count and if they need support then they should have it, especially at an early age. The Parks provision provided this.</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
53	<p>23/11/23</p> <p>Abusive email and followed by an apology</p>
54	<p>24/11/23</p> <p>I've been convinced to write to you after seeing the passion and concern felt by parents and friends of the Parks Special School.</p> <p>These families are already facing many challenges and to take away the support of a local school geared to their needs seems insensitive and unnecessary.</p> <p>The early years are so important for all children, to build confidence in a supportive environment where they will be with children and families living with similar needs. Specialist teaching and care at this stage will help them thrive and allow them to move on and progress, maybe to a mainstream school.</p> <p>Parents with non SEN children have choice as to where to send their children for their education. You are taking away a vital and perhaps only option from the families that have no choice yet need it most.</p> <p>Please reconsider.</p> <p>No relationship to Parks Special School, just someone affected by the passion and worry of parents fighting for their children's futures</p> <p>PS I have read your counter proposal but still feel that the status quo is the best option for the families concerned</p>
55	<p>25/11/23</p> <p>There needs to be a special school in Oakham for the needs of children my ** use to go there</p>

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56	<p>26/11/23</p> <p>I am writing to share my concerns about the closure of The Parks school in Oakham. I chose to send ** to Oakham C of E because there is a special unit attached as I wanted her to see that children with special needs are part of society. My **** is a big part of our life, but in the county ** lives in there isn't the same provision and it's a struggle for ** to be in a mainstream setting. Children with special needs don't deserve ostracised. The Parks is such a brilliant way of blending the needs of all children in one school.</p> <p>I hope that the decision to close the school can be reconsidered. I have seen through my sister's experience how tough it is if you have a child who needs more support. Access to the necessary provision is so difficult to get. The Parks school is such a vital local resource.</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
57	<p>26/11/23</p> <p>I have copied in my Ward Councillors and the Portfolio holder for Children's. I ask that this be shared with all Councillors.</p> <p>**</p> <p>The Parks Special Nursery School in Oakham consists of two classrooms attached to Oakham C of E Primary School. The Parks caters for children aged between two to six years old, contrary to what RCC's website says.</p> <p>** attended an amazing and local mainstream nurse during ** early years. This nursery was amazing and gave ** all the support ** possibly could, and **made sure to fight (and yes, ** did have to fight for this,) for extra funding from Rutland County Council in order to provide more support from ** lovely SENCO.</p> <p>It became apparent that this was not enough. ** had significant delays in both language and development despite the support put in place from the nursery and support from the inclusion team at RCC. It was decided that ** needed to attend The Parks School.</p> <p>This first started as a dual placement for ** – despite the extra and specialist support in mainstream, ** still needed a specialist setting in order to have **needs met. ** then needed to increase ** time at The Parks to a full-time placement.</p> <p>** then continued to do** foundation year at The Parks School. At this time The Parks did not require young children to have Education Health Care Plan's to attend their specialist pre-school. The Parks were instrumental in the process of ** being secured an EHC Needs Assessment and an EHC Plan. This was before ** were even diagnosed and support was so difficult to access because of this, The Parks being there for **, and us was a lifeline in order to gain the support that was needed.</p> <p>The Parks taught ** to communicate with me, and then to talk. They taught **so many basic life skills, to eat, to start the toileting journey which was more difficult for **, to begin to understand and regulate ** emotions - which for ** needed a significant amount of high intervention to be able to achieve.</p> <p>When we entered the SEND parenting journey, The Parks was our first port of call. Through them we met other parents and carers and were welcomed into a community that became, and still is a lifeline to us. The Parks supported us through some truly difficult times, and are a beacon of light and hope. They are unwavering in their empathy, compassion and support. They understand what you are going through, as a family, and are not judgemental but exceptionally generous in their care. Without the additional input from The Parks, I am certain that ** would have ended up attending a specialist primary school out of county. This is something that RCC claims to want to avoid. The provision at The Parks meant they could attend their local primary school (the designated specialist provision unit on Oakham C of E Primary School. Specialist units are legally classed as mainstream settings.) ** remember their</p>

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time at The Parks fondly and we all grew to love the people who work there. I simply cannot do The Parks justice in my testimonial but I implore all those who read this to believe me that we must save this school. The work they do is very much needed and this need is only increasing. The Parks is part of what makes Rutland a special place, where it is a county for everyone.

Since ** time at the school, the admittance criteria has been tightened and only children with EHCP's can attend, thus lowering the numbers. It is not common for young children to be issued with EHCP's. I believe this was a Local Authority decision to do this. The EHCP process in Rutland is an issue in itself. The feel and verbal anecdotes (and my own personal experience,) is that assessments are delayed and prevented by RCC. Officers and managers at RCC will verbally advise schools and early years settings to not apply, and they say the same to parents, despite whether children meet the legal criteria to assess. We also have a problem with unspecific EHC plans in Rutland which do not meet the legal framework (The Children and Families act 2014,) or adhere with the Statutory Framework, The SEND Code of Practice. The legal test for an EHC needs assessment is contained within Section 36(8) of the children and families act, and in brief it is met if a child has or **may** have SEND, and whether they **may** need SEND provision to be made through an EHCP. This is a very low threshold, and we should see more children than RCC are stating having EHC needs assessments.

The criteria for plans to be issued is slightly higher, but still a low legal threshold. This is contained in section 37(1) of the same act. Due to the low numbers of children under 5 with EHCP's and the very low numbers of those being assessed, I believe there is still an outstanding issue with RCC and the EHCP process.

The assessment process is also taking a long time and I am unsure if RCC are meeting the statutory timeframes for these, in total an EHC needs assessment should take 20 weeks from the request to assess, to the issuing of a final plan. If the decision is not to issue it should be 14 weeks. Any delay with this not only frustrates a families legal rights, but further prevents children from being able to access provision at The Parks.

I am aware that there are families who do have children in nurseries who want and need to go to The Parks. Since the announcement that only two children needed the Parks, parents have confirmed a further child has been admitted to the Parks.

It says in the consultation that having suitable settings closer to home which reduce the need to travel is widely understood to be better for children and their families. For children who need The Parks, like mine, the school not being there would have pushed them away from, and out of their communities as they could not have, and would not have been able to continue in a mainstream nursery.

The Parks is in Rutland, closer to home than nearest non-independent (and therefore costly,) special provision out of county, which is Birchwood in Melton Mowbray.

** attending The Parks allowed ** to progress enough to be able to attend Designated Specialist Provision at Oakham C o E Primary school. This will have saved RCC money in the long term. Had ** not attended The Parks ** would have needed to either go out of county to attend a special school, or have a costly independent placement within our county. ** are not the only children that will have saved RCC money by doing this.

I also want to highlight that Designated Specialist Provision (units on the schools,) is not actually classed as specialist provision, but is actually classed as mainstream. Expanding this is expanding our mainstream offer and not expanding the non-existent specialist schools on offer. Case law is the following; (TB v Essex County Council [2013] UKUT 534 (AAC), B-M and B-M v Oxfordshire County Council (SEN) [2018] UKUT 35).

I am aware that 3 schools wanted to set up specialist schools in Rutland, and all were blocked by RCC who claimed the numbers were not there. These schools were the Rutland Learning

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Trust, Willoughby and Birchwood. The numbers are there, a large number of children are sent out of county. The LA spend an astronomical amount of money on transport, and children within Rutland within specialist schools are at a very high cost to RCC.

There is not space for SEND children in mainstream nurseries, I believe the childcare efficiency study stated that there was 28% capacity in nurseries. If the plan is to admit more children with SEND, nurseries and childminders will need significantly more support, and building space in order to support these children, which they just don't have. This will be at a much greater cost to RCC.

The support to Nurseries and Childminders that RCC give is not enough, and a separate and serious issue within its own right.

I have been told by nursery managers and owners that the Specialist Early Years Teachers have called twice a year and that is all the support they had. I also want to highlight that Speech and Language (SALT,) provision from NHS isn't being provided. I have had a recent appointment with the Leicestershire SALT service telling me they just can't meet the provision in children's plans.

SENIF funding is now banded from £2-£8 per hour and RCC ask nurseries to use universal funding for 2, 3 and 4 year olds to top up any difference. Universal funding is not meant for this. The funding used to be at £10 per hour which is still not enough. How are nurseries meant to provide 1:1 support for children that need it on £2-£8 per hour? They cannot raise nursery fees to cover the cost for supporting SEND children as it is not allowed. They will simply be unable to admit the children, this will cost RCC more.

I also want to ask is where is the £250,000 that is "saved" by the proposal to close The Parks, intended to go to? The website states that it will be "reinvested into Early Years SEND support across the county" and then later states that "This money will not be taken away from the school but will be used to enhance the offer at Oakham Primary School. This will be done by increasing the number of places in the school's Designated Special Provision (DSP) from September 2024." This will only increase the spaces in the DSP by 4. How can a placement at The Parks be three times higher than at the DSP, when The Parks can offer 7.5 spaces, but the money created by closing it can create 4?

There will always be children who will need the most support and they will need places like The Parks. You judge a society by how they treat their most vulnerable. By this attitude Rutland are saying they want to take away from our most vulnerable children. You cannot give everyone the same level of support; you must assess by need. We need equity and not equality.

Closing The Parks is short sighted and will not save money in the long term. You could open it up to out of county admissions and generate money from other local authorities. You could make it into an efficient assessment centre again.

There are children who need the parks. I implore Councillors to talk to local Nurseries and Childminders directly to ask about the support they currently receive and if it is adequate. I can guarantee they will find the following; that the support is woefully inadequate, and that there are children who need The Parks.

Finally, as a last note, on the Q&A on The Parks consultation page it states "*What kind of wider support would be available to parents of families of children with additional needs, if The Parks were to close?*" I can tell you from personal experience that the support on offer is insulting and inadequate, and I am not alone with that judgement. Do not take away the one thing that works, and that Rutland does well.

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	<p>Please listen to the public on this.</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
58	<p>26/11/23 **</p> <p>I have a personal connection to The Parks which I will detail below but I also have a deeply held moral belief that education is a basic human right, and it is the responsibility of a civilised society to care for its most vulnerable, which OFSTED recognise The Parks is “outstanding” in so doing.</p> <p>I attended the launching of the public consultation for the closure of The Parks School on the evening of Wednesday 1st November and was proud to be there to support the school. However, I found that the accessibility needs of the people who may wish to attend, particularly for a consultation considering people with additional needs, was completely overlooked. One elderly lady arrived with a walking aid and was shocked to find stairs up to the room but no one was there to offer her assistance or suggest an alternative accessible route so she had to struggle up them with some help from her elderly husband. There is also no opportunity for past pupils of The Parks or other people with communication aids, such as Talking Tablets or PECS, who are unable to send emails or use the telephone to convey their wishes and feelings regarding the proposal, surely their voices have as much right to be heard as the rest of us.</p> <p>You said you appreciate that everyone has very strong feelings about this but I honestly think you have no idea of the impact that this nursery school has on families. For me personally, when it was at the old site, it is the place that taught my ** to communicate and move independently, this then lead to my ** to teaching there and I completed work experience there, for a number of years it was my second home, a safe place where I was always made to feel welcome. My ** also works for the council, ** and without the expertise and knowledge of the staff at The Parks ** future would have been much more limited. These are the types of children for whom The Parks is essential, those who cannot access mainstream nurseries even with additional support and if they did it would be detrimental for both themselves and the other children accessing the provision.</p> <p>The main reason behind the closure of The Parks School appears to be because you say it is no longer financially viable but I don't believe all options have been considered. Instead of closing the parks to save money why not approach it from a different perspective and look at expanding it to make money, neighbouring local authorities used to pay to send their SEND children there and I'm certain they would jump at the chance to be able to access such a provision again. If The Parks were to keep accepting children for their Reception year this also increases the number of children that it could accommodate. Another option would be to allow children and families who are awaiting diagnosis or undergoing the EHCP process to access the provision, this would almost definitely increase the number of children on roll at The Parks.</p> <p>Also, I believe it to be untrue when you say there would be no children enrolled from next September. The local support group for preschool children with additional needs is oversubscribed and has a waiting list for spaces. One of the members of the group working to save The Parks has identified at least 7 (possibly more) children whose parents would like them to attend for next year and believe it is the most suitable setting for them. The cost of supporting these children in mainstream nurseries is likely to be more than educating them in the Parks, because they will require expensive additional equipment, changes to the</p>

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environment, and specialist support staff. It will cost the council less to support these children together in a small group in The Parks, where they can share specialised staffing and equipment. I believe that rather than a falling demand for the sort of “outstanding” education The Parks provides, it has instead been made harder and harder for parents to access. For many years, The Parks was oversubscribed.

One of the points made at the consultation launch was that nurseries like The Parks are very rare nowadays, surely this is even more reason to keep it open, maintain the outstanding provision it is and celebrate the work that Rutland do through early intervention, which many researchers have found ultimately saves money in the long run. There are also wider financial implications that the closure of The Parks will have. Parents who have children that can no longer access a suitable setting, because mainstream can't provide what they need or they are so medically complex that their lives can't be trusted with anyone who isn't sufficiently trained, will be left with no other choice but to give up work and stay at home due to lack of childcare. This means they will no longer be able to financially contribute to our society in the way they would have done before but you will also be pushing those who are most vulnerable and unable to speak up for themselves further towards the edges of society.

I feel that overall this is a very short sighted move. In the short term I'm sure it will save money but in the long term, without the early intervention, you will have less children who can cope in settings such as the DSP at Oakham C of E Primary School or even potentially integrate into mainstream as they get older because they have missed out on the vital building blocks they need for their education therefore you will be paying more to send more children to out of county specialist schools because Rutland will have no suitable provision. I do not think it morally right to reduce specialist provision for the most profoundly disabled and vulnerable children, so that more can be spent on those who's needs are such that they are able to access mainstream. I believe that if The Parks closes, more parents will go to tribunal to get specialist provision for their children, which will incur additional legal costs to Rutland County Council.

I believe you have also received criticism from local nurseries who are not on board with the current plan and feel they are unable to provide the appropriate care and attention to meet the needs of the children who attend settings such as The Parks. They have admitted that they do not have the expertise to care for these children and are unable to provide the adjustments they need, such as much smaller class sizes or a space to themselves. They have also highlighted that the support and funding from the council is so little that it is already a nearly impossible task. You said that you would like children with SEND to interact with their peers but the children at mainstream nurseries are not their peers, they don't think and play in the same ways, they can't build meaningful interactions with each other and the children you are trying to integrate would end up more isolated than ever because their needs differ so greatly.

I do not agree that at a time where across the country other counties are building more special school places, Rutland should be reducing the special school places. I do not believe that all parents with children with the complex needs for which The Parks caters would prefer their children educated in mainstream nurseries or in the designated specialist provision, and I believe in parental choice as per the code of practice. The closure of The Parks will not bring about more choice, as the proposal states, but will leave parents with no choice but to keep their children at home until they reach primary school age when the local authority will have to provide transport and education out of county. At a time when other local authorities are

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	<p>investing in more special school places, I object that Rutland County Council are reducing their provision.</p> <p>As a student social worker I believe in the child's right to not be put at a substantial disadvantage compared with their peers and for discrimination to be eliminated but I feel that the closure of The Parks would not achieve this and I feel it is my moral duty to express my grave concerns over this proposal both for the children and families whom The Parks serves, and the wider community. I therefore object in the strongest possible terms to the proposal, and I urge Rutland County Council to pursue strategies which would make The Parks viable without closing it or reducing the provision that it is able to offer.</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
59	<p>27/11/23</p> <p>I would like to ask you not close the Parks Special School as the outcome for the 2 - 6 year old children affected will have to endure a great hardship of having to go elsewhere at so young an age.</p>
60	<p>27/11/23</p> <p>I was saddened to learn during a recent visit to Oakham that this incredible facility is facing closure. Although I am not currently resident in Rutland, I lived in Oakham for many years and my brother attended the school for a short time. It follows that I am aware of the value that the school brings, not just to those pupils, families and staff involved with it, but also to the whole community. I do hope the public consultation is not simply a box ticking exercise and that the proposed closure is a "done deal". I know that many share the same view as myself and urge the decision makers to reconsider the closure of the school.</p>
61	<p>27/11/23</p> <p>We ** appreciate, that as a Local Authority school, the decision to propose the closure of The Parks School is solely a Local Authority decision.</p> <p>However, having been co-located with Oakham CofE Primary, we have seen that, The Parks School has and continues to provide, outstanding care and provision for children and families across Rutland. Some of our most vulnerable local children, many with significant learning and complex medical needs or disabilities, have benefited and thrived from enriching opportunities and the professionalism, dedication and love from our school staff team.</p> <p>Governors largest concern is the lack of clarity around the pathways, provision and support for nursery aged children and their families who would have benefitted from a place at The Parks School now or in the future. This early intervention and support has been pivotal in the success of the children the school has supported. Its value and impact helping to reduce the stress on the overall resources in the longer term. While we recognise that our provision is unique, rare and not a statutory obligated provision for Rutland County Council, we have always believed that this is something to celebrate.</p> <p>If The Parks were to close, further expansion and staffing resources would need to be allocated to the Designated Specialist Provision with Oakham CofE to meet demand.</p> <p>Whatever the outcome of the consultation and any resulting decision by the Local Authority, our overarching aim is to support our staff team and the children and families which The Parks School serves. We want to ensure that, in whatever form, we still have an integral role in ensuring all local children with all ranges of needs and disabilities have their specific needs met locally.</p>
62	<p>28/11/23</p>

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I would firstly like to thank the Council for listening to parents, carers and interested parties at the introductory Consultation meeting and for involving Maureen Morris to have oversight of this Consultation. I found the published questions on the Council website very helpful in forming some of my arguments.

My interest in this Consultation is as a former member of Staff at the Parks School for more than ** years, through many changes and improvements. I worked there as a **, a **, the ** Co-ordinator and an ** worker carrying out Portage with children under the age of 2 years, as well as supporting children into main stream Nurseries and Reception classes.

I support the concept of Inclusion in main stream Early Years settings, if enough support can be provided for the children and their families. It is the right thing for many children with less severe SEND. Developmental input before the age of 5 years is as vital for children with SEND as it is for all other children. However, I believe that for the best possible outcomes, many children need a fully immersive environment, which does not just rely on a professional expert working with the child for a short session perhaps once a week. The children cannot receive the intensity of help that they may need in a busy, noisy Nursery Class.

The Staff at the Parks are able to deliver signing, communication systems, daily physiotherapy and other treatments if required, special equipment for indoor and outdoor play and all of this is in place for the child ALL of the time. They can work in a distraction free environment if that is how they learn best and work in very small groups if they have Social and Communication difficulties. I believe that this level of supportive start leads to better outcomes for the children in the next steps of their education, particularly for children on the Autism Spectrum or with Speech and Language problems. These children are at greater risk of developing behavioural difficulties if they become frustrated by their difficulties in communicating. Children with Autism in particular are helped by being in a very structured learning environment, something which cannot be guaranteed in a main stream Nursery. I believe that this level of input at an early age will reduce the expense to the Council of 'rescuing' these children at a later date when their difficulties may have increased. The extra 'three times' cost of providing a place at the Parks School could easily be dwarfed by the cost of putting in more extensive support at a later date for a child whose difficulties have increased, particularly if this has to be provided 'out of County'.

Having established what I consider to be valid arguments for retaining the Parks School there are other specific issues that I am concerned about:-

The Council has claimed that there will be no children requiring specialist Early Years provision after September 2023. At the Consultation introduction meeting, parents AND an Early Years provider stated that they have been discouraged from setting in motion an EHC Plan. One parent also claimed that some families are not even being told about the existence of the Parks School by other involved professionals. She had evidence of this from a parent with a child with Special Needs.

There is a high cost to the Council in providing education and transport out of the County for children with PMLD. In addition, they have a long, extended day because of travel times and will be less likely to have peer friends in the area that they live. I have a Paediatric Nursing background and therefore many PMLD children were able to attend the Parks School while I worked there, even though I was not employed as a Nurse. I feel that Rutland should look at the costs of out of county placements and assess whether the extra funding involved might be more than enough to provide a Paediatric Nurse post and allow these children to be supported in County. It would then also be possible to include some older children, who will

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never be able to access Main Stream education, in an extended setting. This would be an argument for improving the provision and making it viable.

The School currently has an 'Outstanding' Ofsted report. When the school had its first Ofsted this was also Outstanding and, in fact, the School was named as a School of Excellence in Parliament. It seems extraordinary that such a provision is again at risk. The Council used to boast about the School and I know personally that RAF and Armed Services personnel, who had children with Autism, actively requested postings to the area so that their children had an opportunity to attend the Parks. Instead of pointing out that there are very few places like the Parks, the Council should be showing Authorities elsewhere how the best can be provided.

There are currently very experienced Staff at the School, who are able to support children to attend other Early Years settings, in addition to their experiences at the Parks. If the School is closed, this pool of expertise will soon disperse and be lost, with a knock-on effect for main stream settings.

Families of children attending the Parks have always praised the support that they have received from all of the Staff. In many cases they have only just received their child's diagnosis and are devastated. I have lost count of how many parents told us that they would not still be together if they had not had support from the School in all areas. I do not believe that the main stream Nurseries have the time, resources and (sometimes) expertise to provide help at this level, however much they would want to.

I am not convinced that placing some children with SEND in an ordinary Nursery setting is truly 'inclusive'. From my own experience I have seen many occasions when, after a short while, the child lags behind their peer group's attainments, resulting in them almost becoming isolated, with their key worker providing experience away from the rest of the group, particularly if their difficulties are disruptive for group learning. My daughter-in-law works as a TA in a main stream Reception Class. She has had experience of the difficulties of including a child with Downs Syndrome, with no language and behavioural difficulties, which mean that she refuses to sign. Her frustrations have sometimes meant that she has been aggressive and hurt members of staff. This became so disruptive for the rest of the children that she has been taught and played with away from her peers - hardly Inclusion!

In conclusion, the Parks School is an amazing place. There were moves to close it in the past and current and past families fought to retain it then. Ex pupils spoke out against the closure. I don't believe that the arguments are very different now, the loss to future children and their families would be incalculable. I would beg the Council to reconsider at the decision Council meeting next year.

*** Identifying personal details redacted*

63 28/11/23

Firstly I will explain my connection to the Parks School. My name is ** and I was a Teaching Assistant at the Parks for ** years leaving my position there in **. I was highly trained , through the school, gaining a foundation course in **, Level 3 ** and I was trained as a **, working with very young pre school children/ babies and parents in a home situation. My Job was primarily to work with Autistic children from the age of 2 and a half to 6 in the Autism classroom.

Every single day our team members would work with individual named children on a key worker 1:1 basis , we would have group sessions which concentrated on confidence building and social interactions, I specialised in art therapy and led groups and individual sessions to promote creativity and let the children express themselves and be themselves through sensory art.

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	<p>The most important years of a child’s developmental life, as we all know, is from birth to the age of 5, this is a vital, proven statistic for a child without developmental issues so is even ‘more important’ for those young children who have Special Educational Needs.</p> <p>The Parks Nursery School always was and most definitely is a place to nurture these special children, what ever their disability and also very importantly their families who feel so vulnerable due to this frightening and life changing situation they find themselves in. The highly trained staff are there to access needs, provide interventions with regards communications and social integration, care for and support family members and hopefully help these very young children get ready to face their world their own way with the hope they will integrate through into a school placement, if appropriate. The communications systems that are taught at The Parks are so important for SEN children to be able to move forward in life and learn to ‘communicate’</p> <p>I feel tthis school most definitely needs to be kept open and expanded in an ever growing county, and keep providing valuable learning and life skills. As the Department of Education have stated for 24 – 25 in their improvement plan, ‘...All children with Special Needs and disabilities should receive the support they need with earlier intervention, consistent high standards and less bureaucracy’.</p> <p>Please, please reconsider. I have seen first hand what this special school achieves for the SEN children of Rutland and their families , it is a vital and hugely important resource for the county and we should support, be proud of and promote it as a Centre of Excellence.</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
64	<p>28/11/23 (first representation)</p> <p>**</p> <p>I wish to express my concerns over the proposed closure of the Parks school.</p> <p>I would like to start by stating that disability is indiscriminate of age, race, gender and economic status. Anyone can become disabled, or be diagnosed as such, at any point in their lives. The children who attend the Parks are born with their disabilities, be they physical and/or neurological. As one sign at the recently held protest to save the Parks school said; “would you close it if it were your child”?</p> <p>From a personal view point, the proposal to close the Parks is one that I wholeheartedly oppose.</p> <p>**</p> <p>The Parks school is listed on the DfE website as a community special school, able to accommodate 8 full time pupils. The school has been rated “Outstanding” by Ofsted in it’s last two Ofsted inspections. This rating is the highest accolade that Ofsted can give a setting. Is it any wonder that the community are up in arms at the proposed closure of one of the best schools in Rutland and the only community special school! To date, our change.org petition has 3037 signatures from the community. The law is clear when it comes to closing a maintained setting. The LA must provide an alternative that is more accessible than and either equivalent to or better than what is already being provided. The DSP at Oakham C of E does not have an Outstanding rating from Ofsted, nor do many of the mainstream nurseries in Rutland. The DSP’s entry criteria policy also requires children to have an EHCP, making it as inaccessible as the Parks.</p> <p>To close the Parks, or change what they currently do in any way, would have a devastating effect on SEND children in Rutland. From the details I have already mentioned about my own children, there are children who will always need the level of intervention, safety, expertise</p>

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and support that the Parks provide and further problems as they grow older can be avoided by providing that crucial early intervention.

Two years ago, the entry criteria policy for the Parks school was changed from a child with an identified need, usually through the health visiting service under a section 17 of the Children's Act, to a child with an EHCP. I would like to know why RCC did not follow the statutory process as outlined by the government that must be followed when making a significant change to a school? It is unusual for a child under 5 to have an EHCP, mainly due to waiting lists to see a paediatrician or other services or because of delays in applying for and gathering the evidence for the EHCP itself. The local authority employ the use of educational psychologists to assess a child's needs, take advice from health professionals, gather information from educational settings, social care and of course, ask parents and carers to help provide the voice of the child in order to form an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for children who need them. Taking this view of assessment of need, it would be a natural consequence that the views of SEND children, parents, carers, wider family members and the community should form a vital part in the decision-making process, when determining the future of specialist provision in our county. It would seem that the local authority have already decided the fate of the only community special school in Rutland. The ridiculously timed short consultation period is wholly indicative of this. The perpetual inconsistencies, lack of transparency and repetitive inaccuracies within the Parks Proposal are indicative of the dim view the local authority take of the community and their views in this process.

I am somewhat bewildered by the persistent view of many RCC staff and councillors that "we don't want out of county children attending the Parks". Why?! It makes no sense at all, especially considering that the local authority are very happy to send their older children out of county to specialist schools instead of opening their own. There is significant irony in the fact that the local authority have consistently permitted the building of numerous retirement homes and complexes in Rutland over the last few years. By the very nature of old age, a good percentage of the people moving to Rutland to buy these flats are going to need some form of support from the local authority. This was a deliberate move by RCC, to allow the development of such accommodation. When a local authority deliberately encourages one group in society to take up residence in the county and deliberately cuts services to the very bone for another group, surely that then becomes an issue of social justice in the very least. At most, it is discrimination.

If the Parks is struggling financially, it is almost a given that increasing the amount of pupils would mean it would become financially viable as the cost per child would lower. As ** rightly pointed out, no matter whether you put DSP children in the building or Parks children, the basic running costs of the school will remain. This begs the question of what advantage is it to the local authority to close the Parks and expand the DSP? As a Michelin starred restaurant owner, if you had had a bad couple of months of turnover, it would be nonsensical to close your good quality business or turn it into a fast food restaurant. Both of RCC's explanations as to where the money saved from closing the Parks appear to be somewhat short-sighted. To close a provision that caters for the most vulnerable children in our area to distribute that funding further and benefit less needy children is ludicrous. There has been little mention of this plan since the consultation was launched and it would now seem that closing an 8 full time placed provision in order to fund another 4 places in a DSP is now the plan. Is the local authority suggesting that places in the DSP cost more than places in the Parks?! I'm not even going to try and explain how the maths just doesn't add up.

It would seem that the LA have taken to calling the Parks school the "Parks nursery school."

This is misleading the general public as it is still listed on the Dfe website as a community specialist school which can cater for up to 8 children full time, or more children if those spaces

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are attended part time. Reducing the number of children right down to only preschool aged children does not mean a school suddenly becomes a nursery, particularly when the government statutory process for making significant changes to a school does not appear to have been followed, yet again.

I would like to know if the local authority have considered the following options before proposing the closure of the Parks? They are listed as follows:

- Allow another, well established specialist school to take over the Parks.
- Approach CIT, a learning trust based in Lincolnshire who have numerous specialist settings on their books, including one in Leicestershire.
- Invest section 106 money into the Parks.
- Apply to the free schools program, although I am aware that the program has closed to new applications.
- Allow the Parks to become a Community Interest Company or a charity.
- Offer the Parks to already established local charities to run.
- Look at community grants to help with the costs of running the school.
- Allow children from neighbouring counties to attend the Parks.
- Open the Parks during the holidays as a holiday club, which will benefit the economy as well as the school because parents will be able to work.
- Extend the provision to encompass key stage one children, thus lowering spend costs.

The government guidance also states that an equivalent provision should be made available that is MORE accessible for families without the loss of expertise and specialism. Making the Family Hub, based at the Children's centre, available to nursery aged/preschool SEND children is not an equivalent and in no way better than the current arrangements. The Family Hub building is small and facilities are limited. The support and therapy groups being proposed as being equivalent to the support the Parks children receive are already in existence. I can assure you, from personal experience, that the Family Hub and groups that have been suggested are in no way suitable for a child that is distressed and dysregulated. A 6 week makaton course is not in any way comparable to speech and language support delivered by qualified staff in a safe, quiet and calm setting. Many nursery aged Autistic children are unable to use alternative communication systems as they also need certain levels of understanding that often such young children have yet to reach.

I believe that the closure of the Parks has been on the agenda for years and that RCC have slowly been stripping away provision until there is very little left to close. The children who need the Parks school are not going to reach their full potential in mainstream settings, let alone survive. The damage this move will cause to the children's mental health is untold and an unforgivable sacrifice to make to save money. I do not believe that the closure is in anyone's best interests, only the local authorities budget figures. I believe the proposed closure is a move designed to force SEND children and their families out of Rutland, which is discriminatory and immoral.

Nurseries in Rutland are already struggling. The move to a banding system has had a serious impact on SENIF funding. The nurseries report that the support and training they currently receive is adequate, **however**, for some children, it is not enough. Physical space and the safety of other children and staff are already being compromised. The nurseries have already seen parents removing their children and going elsewhere because their child has been repeatedly injured. The local authority must remember that private nurseries are businesses. They do not have to accept children they cannot physically and /or safely accommodate and

that there is no assessment tool available to formerly establish whether a nursery can meet need.

Inclusion is not tantamount to integration. To integrate children who have behaviour that is indicative of distress into mainstream settings is unsafe. It will also show an increase in such behaviours, leading to a greater financial impact on the LA's budget, not to mention the damage done to the SEND children which is immeasurable. Staff will need extra training in restraint and de-escalation techniques. The number of tribunals will rise and seeing as Rutland is one of a handful of counties nationally who use barristers against most often, undefended parents at tribunal, costs will rise, sharply.

I am concerned that there is a lot of talk of children who are neurodivergent. Very little has been mentioned about children who have profound, multiple and complex needs or severe learning difficulties. What will happen to those children? Where will they be educated? Do they not have the right to an education in their local community? The domino effect of more SEND children in mainstream nurseries mean that the nurseries will start to fail financially and eventually close, meaning there will be less and less settings to cater for nursery children in the county. The current cost of living crisis means that moving counties, let alone house, for most families is not an option. So what happens then?

The SEND paper, which is still a green paper, states that mainstream schools need to become more inclusive. This is a given in any society. It also states, however, that a child's needs are still paramount and that provision for children who cannot access mainstream must still exist. Closing the Parks is removing the only community special school in Rutland. This will mean that very small children who live in Rutland will either be forced to survive in mainstream settings, who are already struggling to cope on the little funding available, or to stay at home. For children to stay at home, this will be devastating for many families. For some children, the increasingly diminishing choice of specialist settings means that an Education Other Than At School package is the only viable option for them. The rise in EOTAS packages will have an untold impact on the LA's budget. It is a known fact that parents of SEND children seriously struggle to work and most give up completely, forcing them into a position of poverty that could be avoided by providing suitable care for SEND children. The local authority have a duty of care, not only to the children who will be effected by the closure, but also the families of those children. Forcing children to stay at home means they miss out on a vital window of opportunity in their development. Early intervention is just that, early! In Autistic children, the age at which their needs emerge is generally around 18 months to 2 years. Research has proven that intervention at this age is effective and improves the general outcomes for those children. Suicide rates amongst Autistic adults, many of whom are late diagnosed and haven't had the benefit of early intervention are among the highest in society at 40%.

Closing such a vital part of the SEND pathway in Rutland is no longer an education issue, it is a social justice problem. To not provide any settings exclusively for the most vulnerable in our county is discrimination and a breach of disabled children's human rights.

Specialist schools provide children with a sense of safety and belonging. It allows children and their families to form communities where they are accepted. This is vital for well being. This can impact positively on the LA's budget because children will feel safe and content at school meaning they are able to learn. This in turn effects how they feel and consequently, behave at home thus reducing the need for carers assessments, respite packages, personal budgets and interventions from Early Help and Social Care. It will also reduce the need for further specialist education for some children.

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	<p>One of the biggest deficits the local authority has is transport. Travel arrangements for SEND children is historically difficult and this situation will not improve by closing the Parks. The local authority has a responsibility to make decisions that are in the best interests of the public purse.</p> <p>I am aware that Rutland are pilots for the Delivering Better Value project and the Change program. Whilst this is positive for Rutland, it is important to remember that policy, especially that which is being tested out, does not trump law and consequently children’s rights to a suitable education and early intervention.</p> <p>28/11/23 (second representation)</p> <p>Please could someone clarify as to why people who are sending responses in to this address are receiving multiple different automated responses?</p> <p>Many thanks</p> <p>** Identifying personal details redacted</p>
65	<p>29/11/23</p> <p>**</p> <p>I was shocked and dismayed to learn of the Council’s plan to close the Parks Special School. I have a grandchild who attended the Parks when he was 4.</p> <p>At the age of 3 weeks he was rushed to hospital where the doctors diagnosed and immediately treated **. As a result, he has many problems including being non-verbal. He attended a mainstream nursery where the staff struggled to meet ** needs and he was referred to the Parks. Within a very short time of being there, he was beginning to form words and communicate ** needs. He stayed at the Parks for a year before moving on the Birchwood, in Melton. Without the early intervention at the Parks of highly trained and qualified staff and an environment that met ** needs, he would not have made the significant progress that he did.</p> <p>The Parks Special School is the only school specifically for SEND children in the county and received a result of Outstanding at its last two Ofsted inspections. This is not easily gained and should be a cause for much celebration by the local authority. The obvious course of action for the council should have been to champion this achievement and to help The Parks to become a centre of excellence for children with SEND but the authority decide that closure was the best course of action. What a missed opportunity!</p> <p>The council is proposing to put the children who might have attended the Parks into mainstream settings, with one to one support, which will be very partially funded by the council and an assumption that nurseries can subsidise this from the early years education funding grant for 3 & 4 year olds that central government supply to local councils, who then shamefully top-slice it to fund other things. This means that the majority of nurseries walk a very thin financial line and cannot afford to subsidise one to one support.</p> <p>Many of the children who present with behavioural problems are eventually diagnosed with some form of autism. This often involves children having melt down because they cannot cope with the environment, noise or just being around too many people. During a meltdown a child can become aggressive and/or violent. This puts other children attending the setting and staff at risk of both physical and mental harm. With space generally being limited, there are no quiet rooms for these children to go to, no safe spaces where they can recover or go to when they feel overwhelmed.</p> <p>The majority of nurseries would struggle with finding space for the very large pieces of equipment that are required to support children with physical disabilities.</p>

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	<p>These are our most vulnerable children and we are setting them up for failure, if this goes forward. Mainstream is not the place for these children</p> <p>** personal identifying details redacted</p>
66	<p>29/11/23</p> <p>I write in response to Rutland County Council’s (RCC) proposal to close The Parks Community Special School in Oakham.</p> <p>I have a long association with the school in various roles: **</p> <p>I also have a wealth of professional knowledge in the area of SEND, having worked as a SENDCo in a primary school, Primary SEND Consultant for RCC, delivering the National SENCO award through the University of Northampton and for the advisory organisation IPSEA. For many years I have been a volunteer with Rutland Rotaract Family Support Centre (RRFSC) which supports children and young people with SEND and their families and previously ran the Sunflowers pre-school support group.</p> <p>I have also recently been involved in the Early Years Inclusion collaboration group at RCC. As the parent of ** child with a disability, I am a strong advocate of inclusive education and opportunity but I also believe that there remains a place for alternative, specialist provision where this is the most appropriate setting in which to meet an individual child’s needs. With the best will in the world, some children will not manage to access mainstream nursery provision: there appears to be no plan in place for those children, who RCC admits will exist. Although I have a strong personal connection with the Parks School, I have tried to be objective in examining RCC’s proposal for its closure.</p> <p>I was present at the consultation launch on November 1st and I feel the need to highlight the disinterest and ignorance around the proposal shown by RCC officers during their presentation, through their lack of understanding about the school, its purpose and funding. The officer making the presentation referred to Oakham Primary Academy several times during her presentation – there is and never has been a school of this name: The Parks School has been federated with Oakham CofE Primary School which recently joined The Rutland Learning Trust, which is fully supportive of both schools continuing to make provision for children with SEND.</p> <p>The RCC officer also referred to the fact that The Parks is funded for 7.5 FTE places but, <i>“as you can’t have half a child, I’ve rounded this up to 8”</i>. This flippant statement shows a complete lack of understanding of the fact that nursery aged children are not in full-time education, and totally missing the point that The Parks is funded for, and can actually make provision for more than 7.5 children, as those of nursery age would attend part-time. In fact, at the time of the last Ofsted inspection in 2020, there were 10 children on roll.</p> <p>It was also insulting for the officer to imply that members of the EYFS collaboration group had been involved in discussions regarding the future of The Parks : this was absolutely not the case and has forced an apology from RCC to members of that group.</p> <p>Furthermore, information on the proposal and how to respond was not made available until later on November 2nd, at which point the dedicated email address for responses was not working, necessitating an extension of the statutory deadline.</p> <p>This demonstrates to me that the officers involved really do not understand the nature of The Parks and how it is run and are therefore not suitably qualified to make recommendations regarding its future to Cabinet. Their lack of factual knowledge and failure to adhere to due process, shows the lack of importance which is being placed on the future of our most vulnerable children. Therefore, I believe that a decision of this magnitude affecting our most vulnerable children, who are unable to advocate for themselves, should be presented and discussed at full council, with the opportunity for public deputations.</p> <p>The Parks Community Special School is recognised as an OUTSTANDING provision by Ofsted which <i>“helps children to be the best they can be.”</i> (Ofsted 2020). Rather than celebrating the</p>

successes and unique character of The Parks, RCC has bizarrely chosen to use this strength and unusual characteristic as one of their reasons to suggest its closure. However, I do not have confidence that RCC officers are proposing suitable alternative provision for children who might have attended The Parks.

Annex C of the DfE guidance on closing schools (under which RCC states it is conducting this consultation proposal) states, *“Where existing provision that is recognised by the local authority as reserved for pupils with special educational needs is being discontinued, a statement as to how the local authority or the governing body (as the case may be) believe **the proposals are likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of the educational provision for these children**”.*

Ofsted (2020) judged the outcomes for children at The Parks as OUTSTANDING. I do not believe that mainstream nurseries will be able to maintain this and there is no evidence that the educational provision for these children will be improved in any way, especially as local nursery managers clearly stated at the consultation launch that they currently struggle to include children with additional needs due to the limited support available from RCC. Given that most of the local nurseries are independent businesses which cannot be directed by RCC to take individual children, there is a high risk that children with SEND will be left without nursery places unless their parents are willing to transport them further afield or use their energies to challenge a nursery’s decision under the Disability Discrimination Act.

Annex C of the DfE guidance also states that there is a presumption against the closure of nursery schools and *“Where proposals relate to the discontinuance of a maintained nursery school, a statement setting out:*

- *the local authority’s assessment of the quality and quantity of the alternative provision (i.e. alternative suitable schools in the area) compared to the school proposed to be discontinued and the **proposed arrangements to ensure the expertise and specialism continues to be available; and***
- *the accessibility and convenience of replacement provision for local parents.”*

As previously stated, I do not believe that RCC is able to evidence that the expertise and specialism available at The Parks will continue to be available.

The proposal that the higher needs funding should be shared more equitably to benefit more children is, quite frankly, ridiculous. It is a well-known fact, demonstrated through the Pareto principle, that a small minority will always demand greater resource to meet their needs. It is not equitable to withdraw funding from those who need it most and redistribute it to others. Early, intensive intervention is proven to be cost-effective, whether this is in education, medicine or social care. I believe the comparatively high costs of educating a very young child at The Parks are later mitigated by their ability to access educational provision more locally within Rutland, thus avoiding costly school and travel fees outside their locality. I know that my daughter would not have been able to access mainstream primary school without the intensive intervention she received to develop her communication skills during her time at the Parks.

In the long-term this also means that children with SEND can become valued members of their local communities, rather than absent due to travelling for their education. The Parks school is very much part of the wider school and town community: pupils are familiar with the school environment at Oakham CofE Primary and this aids transition if it is an appropriate choice for them to continue their primary education there. Pupils from The Parks access the local community, going for walks into town, to the park, visiting the church and going to buy ingredients from the supermarket or fruits to try from the market. Small numbers and a high staffing ratio also allow for additional activities such as taking the train to Melton Mowbray, practising life skills which parents find daunting. The local beat officers have been known to play Santa and his elf for The Parks at Christmas! Pupils of The Parks may not be educated

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within their immediate locality but they are educated within their community, Rutland being such a small geographic area.

Inclusion means that children are included within their community but also with peers with whom they can interact appropriately and to whom they can relate. Many of the young children who would attend the Parks cannot relate to other children in mainstream nursery. The skilled staff at The Parks are able to help children build meaningful relationships:

“Children learn how to make, and keep, friends because the teachers explain clearly to them how to do this.” Ofsted 2020

Where children are given no option other than to attend their local mainstream setting, this will potentially result in exclusion rather than inclusion, as they will be unable to relate to their peers and may become withdrawn or distressed, resulting in challenging behaviours as communication of their distress, thus alienating them further from their mainstream peers. I believe the resulting impact on already vulnerable children’s mental wellbeing will be immense, risking the start of a long-term, irreversible downward trajectory.

Our neighbouring Local Authorities all have some kind of specialist nursery or pre-school provision – the closure of The Parks would mean that there is no such provision within Rutland, severely disadvantaging very young children with SEND in the area. RCC currently has no alternative specialist pre-school provision or support for children with SEND and their parents, such as Portage or specialist pre-school teachers. Therefore, parents may choose to seek alternative specialist provision in neighbouring authorities, resulting in stressful travel for their children and the probability that they may choose to continue their primary education within another authority in a school environment with which they are familiar, thus costing RCC more in the long term.

Ironically, this would mean that children are having to travel further for nursery provision and are less included in their local communities. Alternatively, parents have indicated that they would choose for their child not to access nursery education at all, thus depriving them of crucial pre-school experiences, education and social interactions.

Stressed, distressed and exhausted parents already have to leave the county to access the majority of their child’s specialist health services: please don’t make them do this to access specialist early education as well.

As a family, we have experienced first-hand the genuine love, care and concern that the staff at The Parks show for all their pupils. They supported us through our darkest moments and provided a safe place where we could express our distress and feel safely “held”. Our ** siblings were as much a part of The Parks family as we were as parents, and they were supported too. To this day, over ** years since our ** left The Parks, we maintain strong friendships with other parents and families. This level of support has not diminished over the years and is one of The Parks great strengths – the lead Ofsted inspector was in tears speaking about it during ** informal feedback to school governors in 2020. The Parks is so much more than just a school.

RCC asserts that there is no current need for places at The Parks, due to low numbers and the age of children attending. Parents and voluntary organisations vehemently dispute this. Local voluntary group, Sunflowers, which supports pre-school children with SEND and their families, has struggled to support the number of families needing their help recently and maintains a waiting list for families to access their service. This is not a new issue and RRFSC also sees waiting lists for the youngest children to access targeted activities such as swimming and horse riding. It is interesting to note that the number on roll at The Parks increased from 8 when Ofsted inspected in 2016 to 10 when they inspected in 2020, before RCC introduced criteria requiring an EHCP to name The Parks for admission.

I think it is important to note that children born this month will be eligible for nursery education in the academic year 2025/26 and that the numbers quoted by RCC for August 2024 represent only a snapshot in time. Numbers can and do change, demonstrated by the fact

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that one family is known to have moved into the area recently in order to access The Parks setting. This is not an isolated incidence and several parents report having recently requested places at The Parks, as well as nurseries requesting EHCPs for children they believe would benefit from a placement at the Parks. Some parents report that they have been discouraged from applying for places at The Parks because there are too few children there to form a peer group.

In terms of funding, RCC states that it is no longer viable to maintain The Parks. I do not believe that RCC has creatively explored all possibilities for using the immense wealth of knowledge, skills and resources available at the Parks to increase support to all children with SEND in Rutland. I do believe that any financial savings to be made will only be short term gains, as some children may move out of county for educational provision or miss out on pre-school education, resulting in a greater level of unidentified needs to be addressed at a later stage. I also believe that there must be economies of scale to be had by keeping specialist equipment and resources in one place, rather than trying to resource several provisions with the same equipment. For instance, not all nurseries will benefit from access to a sensory room or hydrotherapy pool.

As a minimum, I would expect to see a comprehensive, visionary plan for pre-school children with SEND in place before the closure of The Parks is discussed. This would involve access to specialist teachers for those children who might have attended The Parks and a guarantee that outstanding outcomes for those children would be maintained.

Instead of closing this school I would like to see RCC build upon the outstanding provision at The Parks, possibly by amalgamating it with a mainstream nursery to provide greater opportunities for dual placements and social inclusion, whilst at the same time maintaining the skills and specialisms apparent in the setting. Previously, the Parks was used as an assessment setting for children with potential SEND but this is no longer possible due to RCC processes which require an EHCP to access the provision: a return to assessment through a dual mainstream/specialist setting would seem an efficient and cost-effective strategy. The way to improve the universal offer to all children with SEND, in my opinion, is to work with the Parks school to develop its services to reach more children (although according to RCC these children do not exist), not to close it.

*** identifying personal details redacted*

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1/12/23

We, ** are disappointed to learn of the potential closure of The Parks. The Charity was founded by staff and parents from The Parks in 1999, when a need for support for families was identified. Historically we utilised a room within the school to offer our services. Families who access our services have had children attend the school and many of our families have also used the therapy pool.

We are seeing families whose children are unable to cope with mainstream settings and together with long waits for diagnosis these families are in need of support from organisations like ours. Travelling outside of the County for education is also a further strain on children. The need for a special nursery setting appears to be not required from the information supplied by RCC. The development of early years settings and the Schools Support Partnership, on paper, appear to be in a position to support any SEND nursery age children in the future.

We would also like to emphasise the importance of HIGH quality EARLY education for children who have, or may have, special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), as set out in the latest Research & Analysis review for Early Years (2023). Any delay in the early years can give

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	<p>rise to learning difficulty and subsequently to loss of self-esteem, frustration in learning and to behaviour difficulties. Early action to address identified needs is critical to the future progress and improved outcomes that are essential in helping the child to prepare for adult life (section 5.36, Special Educational Needs & Disability Code of Practice 0-25 years, 2015).</p> <p>The Designated Specialist Provision for primary age is only available at Oakham C of E, are their plans to expand this offer to other primary schools in the county? Will this reduce the number of children who are receiving Education Other Than At School funding as schools cannot meet need? Will the number of children who travel outside of county for education now be offered places at Oakham C of E? In short can RCC be confident in the sustainability of this plan for the long term?</p>
68	<p><i>2/12/23 hand delivered via Library</i></p> <p>Please do not close the Parks Special school. My nephew was there when he was young. We need places like this.</p>
69	<p><i>2/12/23</i></p> <p>I sincerely hope that my concerns will be taken with great seriousness and professionalism into the decision of the closure of The Parks Special School.</p> <p>The given reasons from RCC regarding the closure of The Parks and my argument against these are as follows:</p> <p><i>“The Early Years sector now has direct access to advice and support from Specialist Early Years Teachers and Speech and Language Practitioners”.</i></p> <p>At current practice I have no complaints about the early year’s specialist teacher. However, I do feel it will be a struggle to continue with our current support from her as ** is only working for RCC two days a week. With the closure of the parks and the DSP filling up we are likely to see more children within mainstream early years settings. Therefore, this will increase the needs for specialist advice and support both over phone, email and within the setting. How does RCC plan to facilitate this not only for the 2024 cohort but for the years to come?</p> <p><i>“We want to use our limited funding across the County to help the greatest number of children”</i></p> <p>One counterargument against this statement is that it does not take into account the varying levels of need among the children in the County.</p> <p>Quality over quantity: The emphasis on helping the greatest number of children may inadvertently lead to a compromise in the quality of services provided. Limited funding resources being spread thin may result in inadequate support or superficial interventions, preventing the children from receiving the comprehensive assistance and support that they require. By prioritizing quantity, the overall impact on each child's well-being and development may be diminished.</p> <p>Long-term outcomes: Allocating resources to the greatest number of children might not yield significant long-term benefits. Focusing on particular children or groups that require more targeted assistance can lead to more sustainable changes. Therefore, we should be Investing in quality interventions, such as providing comprehensive education such as The Parks.</p> <p>Overall, while helping the greatest number of children might seem like an equitable approach, it fails to address the varying levels of need, may sacrifice the quality of interventions, overlook long-term outcomes, and disregard the diverse needs of individual children. An alternative allocation strategy that considers the unique circumstances of each child would likely result in more effective and meaningful support which can be accessed within one provision such as The Parks.</p> <p><u>Further questions and concerns</u></p> <p>Is mainstream right for all children ? What happens when the DSP is full ?</p>

There is a growing body of research that suggests mainstream settings may not always be the most suitable environments for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) in the early years. Below are some studies and research findings that support this idea: Gray, C., & Whitehurst, T. (2015) concluded that children with SEND in mainstream settings may face challenges in accessing individualized and specialized support. The researchers found that class sizes, limited resources, and lack of training among early years staff can hinder the children's progress.

Bracken, E., et al. (2018) highlighted that mainstream settings might not provide an inclusive environment for children with SEND. The research found that children with SEND received less individualized support, had limited access to adapted learning materials, and experienced difficulty engaging in meaningful activities within the mainstream curriculum.

Cooper, L., et al. (2018) highlighted the potential negative impact of mainstream early years settings on children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The study found that children with ASD may experience high levels of anxiety and stress due to sensory overload, lack of predictability, and social challenges within mainstream settings.

These studies collectively suggest that mainstream early year's settings may not always meet the diverse needs of children with SEND. Individualized support, specialized teaching approaches, and inclusive practices are essential to ensure optimal development and learning outcomes for these children. However, it is worth noting that research also recognizes the potential benefits of inclusive education and the importance of creating inclusive environments (please see my recommendations below)

How does RCC plan to further support the staff working in the early year's settings?

Children with complex needs often require multidisciplinary support involving professionals, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists. By having all staff trained in SEND, they can effectively collaborate with these professionals, ensuring a seamless and coherent approach to supporting the child's development. Additionally, staff with SEND training can also effectively engage and communicate with families, involving them in the child's learning process and supporting their needs. In most settings within Rutland there is usually only one practitioner who is designated as the SENCO. Most of the time this practitioner does not have a qualification for this. Practitioners are not equipped with the specific and complex training required to look after children who may require; manual handling, hoists, peg feeding etc. Will RCC fund more appropriate training for ALL practitioners within Rutland. Although the 'Inclusive practice' course and the Level 3 offered from Dingley's promise has been good it will not be enough to support children with complex needs.

Will RCC be supporting settings to support the practitioners moral and mental health as the stress levels increase with a higher number of children who require support?

Staff morale directly impacts the quality of care and education provided to children. When staff members are happy and motivated, they are more likely to be engaged and be proactive in their work. They are more likely to plan and deliver stimulating and developmentally appropriate activities, ensure children's safety, and provide individual attention and support. However, with a high stress job comes low staff morale which can lead to increased turnover. The early years are already in a recruitment crisis which can be detrimental to the stability and continuity of care. This can disrupt the relationships and routines established with children and families, requiring new staff to be hired and trained if we can find any !

Will RCC be making an effort to 'check in' with setting to see how they are coping. This can not simply be just about the children. Practitioners in the setting are often forgotten about when meetings take place such a review meeting. How are the practitioners coping? With a likely increase in SEN children the stress is likely to be heightened. This needs to be supported for managers and all practitioners.

What happens when nurseries are full or simply cannot take any more children who require SEND support?

50% of my preschool children require some form of support such as SALT, 1:1, inclusion team involvement or already have a diagnosis. I would feel great pressure to accept any further children into my setting who already have emerging needs due to fears of the future, the support available, the care for the other children in the setting, and of course the ability to give them what they deserve. I know there is another Rutland setting who I shall not name but after speaking with them in confidence they have also expressed how they will not be able to take on many children who require support. So when we all start saying no sorry we can not meet there needs where will these children go?

Why has there been such a Lack of further research into the cohort of 2025?

I currently have two children who are at the start of the EHCP referral. I also have one child whose parent has started the EHCP process themselves due to starting the setting recently and the child not transitioning well. These children are due to start mainstream school in September 2024. These children could have potentially benefited from the use of The Parks, however, there has been no rush from RCC to promote practitioners to start the EHCP process nor has there been any encouragement to express to parent's that there is an option other than a mainstream school.

In the setting we do have children who are aged either 2 or 3 years old with potentially some emerging needs. These children could potentially benefit from an EHCP and therefore the parks in future cohorts such as 2025. How is RCC supporting these children if the DSP is full in 2025?

Will RCC be looking for some alternative funding to support the settings and the children who require support ?

I have children within the setting who are currently receiving SENIF funding. Although it was presented to us that some settings would benefit from the new banding system this has not been the case for us. One example I can give you is child A. Child A was previously receiving 12 hours of 1:1 support per week at £10 per hour. Therefore, meaning we received £120 per week to support the child with 1:1. The new banding system has meant that this child has been graded at band 1 meaning they are only entitled to £2 per hour. This comes to a total of £60 a week. This is simply not good enough and if half the money he was receiving before. The only other funding available to children who require support is with DAF funding. This is only accessible to those who have had a diagnosis. This does not happen often therefore meaning not many children are able to access this funding which help to fund resources etc for the child.

My recommendations

My hope going forward is that RCC will employ the Early years specialist teacher for more than 2 days a week.

More inclusion officers that will come and support both the children and the staff – not just observe for an hour.

Dual placement with The Parks for those children who require it. This will mean that they are able to access the specialist support that they require alongside the benefits of mainstream settings.

To help with the viability of The Parks could they not open during the holiday to provide holiday clubs to Rutland and maybe even neighbouring counties who are also term time only. It is so important that parent's receive support and respite all year round not just term time only.

*** identifying personal details redacted*

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2/12/23

** it (The Parks) was, and always will be a very special place. I have witnessed first hand how outstanding this provision is, which has also been reflected by Ofsted in the last two inspections. I have a moral belief that education is a basic human right, and all children should have equal opportunities.

I object to the proposed closure of The Parks based on the following:

- I believe The Parks is an essential provision. Many children with special education needs will not be able to cope in mainstream settings, even with additional support. The environment is not appropriate, and will not enable them to thrive. They will be surviving. I have witnessed this first hand. Often nursery's and early years settings are too loud, and too busy which results in children spending time alone, and away from their peers, as they cannot cope. This is not inclusive, in fact it has such a detrimental impact on the child. It can cause extreme cases of anxiety, frustration and dysregulation. Having seen this first hand, I know that the challenging behaviour that can be seen from SEND children who are struggling to cope in a mainstream provision can be extremely distressing both for them and their peers. Not to mention, the pressure this will also have on the teaching staff. I believe we will also see a rise in mental health conditions in early years practitioners, because of this. The council's aim is for more children with SEND to access mainstream, but this is absolutely not possible for some children. Especially when children have not had the crucial early intervention, that The Parks provides. This simply cannot be replicated in mainstream settings. With this level of early intervention, it may even be possible for some children to access some aspects of mainstream in the future. Early intervention involves early communication skills, which is so important for any child. How would you expect a child who has not received any early intervention, and is non-verbal or pre-verbal, to go into a mainstream setting and access the learning?

- I do not believe that mainstream nurseries and early years settings have the skills, expertise, experience or facilities in order to meet the needs of highly complex and disabled children, such as those who need opportunities to communicate in other ways than verbal, extremely small class sizes, and a safe, nurturing environment that will enable them to learn, and develop. The Parks team have a wealth of knowledge and experience, as well as specialised training, some of which that could be potentially life saving. I know this, as I worked there for almost 10 years, and had this kind of training.

- I believe that the cost of supporting these children in mainstream settings will cost more than educating them in The Parks, because they will require expensive additional equipment, changes to the environment, and specialist support staff. It will cost the council less to support these children together in a small group in The Parks, where they can share specialised staffing and equipment. I do not believe that in the long run, closing The Parks will save council money, as without this important early, intensive intervention, more children will end up needing specialist schools, which will mean sending even more children out of county to get the support they need. Also, why should they have to go out of county? I believe this will also have a detrimental impact on the children, and their families, with more experiencing anxiety and depression as a result.

- There are many children with SEND, in and around Rutland who NEED The Parks. As do their families. The Parks is a lifeline to some families!

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not think it is morally right to reduce specialist provision for the most profoundly disabled and vulnerable children, so that more can be spent on those who's needs are such that they are able to access mainstream. • I do not agree that at a time where across the country other counties are building more special school places, that Rutland should be reducing the special school places. • I do not accept that all parents with children with complex needs for which The Parks caters for, would prefer their children to be educated in mainstream settings. • I believe that if The Parks closes, more parents will go to tribunal to get specialist provision for their children, which will incur additional legal costs to Rutland County Council. • It seems to have become increasingly more difficult to secure a place at The Parks. What was once an assessment centre for children with identified needs, became only available to those with EHCPs. I have spoken to many practitioners, parents and SENCOs who have made it clear that there are increasing numbers of children requiring specialist support in mainstream settings, of whom would benefit greatly from attending The Parks. • I do not feel that all the options for making the Parks viable have been fully explored, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitating access for those children with significant needs who have not yet completed the EHCP process Expanding the provision to cater for more children. Expanding the DSP at Oakham C of E to include nursery age children. Please note that despite RCC claiming that children within DSP access mainstream, most of them do not and cannot. Those children need a highly differentiated curriculum, as well as small class sizes and appropriate areas in which they can withdraw to, if they are feeling dysregulated. If DSP expanded to include nursery age children, it could become its own specialist provision within the Rutland Learning Trust. <p>I have extreme concerns over this proposal. The Parks affects the wider community, and is a lifeline for families. I therefore object in the strongest possible terms to the proposal, and I urge Rutland County Council to pursue strategies which would make The Parks viable without closing it or reducing the provision that it is able to offer.</p> <p><i>** identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
71	<p>3/12/23</p> <p>I am a Rutland resident and ** attended the parks and developed remarkably. Where is the data regarding the number of SEN children in the county requiring this facility ?</p> <p><i>** identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
72	<p>3/12/23</p> <p>I was a teacher for 34 years and have taught in both mainstream and special school settings. Placing children in the correct setting from the offset is vital to their subsequent ability to thrive. If a child is placed in a setting that causes them severe anxiety or lack of stimulation it will colour their view of 'school' for many if not all their school years. If they find a placement</p>

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	<p>that fits their needs the exact opposite can occur, they will see school as a safe place to learn and make positive relationships.</p> <p>Placing a child incorrectly does not only affect them but also their peers in the class. Children who are anxious and upset take more teacher time and attention, resulting in a less positive experience for their classmates.</p> <p>I am a great believer in providing good role models for all children. Many children with a special needs will thrive in a mainstream setting, but for those who don't, we need special provision such as The Parks to at least give them a positive start to school life and learn skills which will enable them to thrive in a less specialist setting.</p> <p>As well as providing support for the child, places like The Parks helps parents to come to terms with their child's special needs and helps them to develop strategies which can support the whole family through the years to come.</p> <p>I hope the council will think very carefully before taking away this very special school. Saving money now may result in spending much more in the future and causing a great deal of trauma to already grieving families who only want to see their children thriving in an appropriate and supportive school setting.</p>
73	<p><i>3/12/23</i></p> <p>We would like to make the following comments in relation to the proposals:</p> <p>It is short-sighted to close the provision on the basis of current numbers. Rutland's population will expand as more houses are built and the requirement for provision for children with special educational needs in the future should be anticipated because once the provision is closed it will not be revived.</p> <p>There are some children whose needs can be met when they are integrated into mainstream provision as long as the teachers are adequately trained and additional support resources are forthcoming. It is also true that some children with particular needs will find this type of provision will hinder their progress and they would be much better served in a setting geared to their requirements.</p> <p>My wife and I have spent our working lives in the education sector. Since moving to Rutland in ** I have worked in three neighbouring counties before becoming an inspector and retiring from Ofsted in 2010. My wife has worked as a teacher in Rutland for over ** years. We both know the importance of specialist provision for children with high needs both for the children and their parents.</p> <p>We understand that a local authority which is small will be faced with difficult choices but this should not be an excuse for letting down.</p> <p><i>** identifying personal details redacted</i></p>
74	<p><i>3/12/23</i></p> <p>I copy in my local councillor, so that they are aware of my views in full, and are able to, as appropriate, represent my views as my democratic representative</p> <p>I strongly object to the proposals to close The Parks. I'm a qualified teacher, with a masters degree at distinction level in ** and have ** children with special educational needs.</p>

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My youngest ** has an EHCP. RCC refused to assess ** and only backed down when threatened with legal proceedings. At nursery in Rutland ** was failed (they didn't even contribute to ** EHCP assessment), and the nursery refused to have any more contact with RCC discussing him. They spent ** DAF funding (£800) after ** was so distressed ** was not able to continue in the nursery and had left, and the local authority early years officer, **, knew this. They had promised to use the money on items to support ** school transition, then the manager of the nursery, reneged on their promise. ** was not given lunchtime meals ** could reliably eat at nursery for over a year, despite us asking, and professionals recommending that ** restricted diet be accommodated. We were told by the nursery that it was OK, because ** had a good snack, but other children still had a lunch they were able to eat. As a consequence ** never accessed ** full entitlement because ** had to come home at lunchtime. ** is currently in mainstream school, but ** accesses only 10 out of 32.5 hours education per week. RCC provide ** with no alternative education. So RCC's claim that ** is "maintaining their education in mainstream" is disingenuous to say the least. I know of several children in mainstream schools who are accessing school part time because their SEND needs are not met - my ** was one such child - for three years ** never attended beyond lunchtime on only 4 days a week, and RCC did not ensure ** had a full time education.

I don't feel the local authority has explored sufficient ways to make The Parks financially viable, including relieving the excess demand for specialist places in other local authorities (which they would pay for) and using the asset effectively in the holidays to provide respite, and considering whether The Parks could be expanded to include KS1 and KS2, absorbing capacity from other local authorities subject to availability (which would thus reduce the cost). Equally, have MATs been approached to see if they would consider taking on The Parks / establishing it at an alternative location?

I feel that The Parks has been rendered under-capacity by RCC policy changes that have made it more difficult to access at a time where parents and nurseries are discouraged from applying for EHCPs, and they take around 6 months in any case. RCC officers are actively discouraging parents from applying for EHCP assessments even when the children meet the legal criteria for one; I met a 4 year old boy in reception the other day who is minimally speaking and can only use 2 words together, yet he has no EHCP. Imagine, for a moment, how you would function in our workplace if you could only put two words together, with minimal speech. Now imagine how the child can be expected to cope in a class of 30 with a single teacher, make friends, participate, and engage at times when he does not have 1:1 TA support. I saw the boy at a party weep, sob, and cry with sheer frustration and sadness at times when he wanted to play, but did not have the communication support he needed to tell his peers what he needed or wanted; he cut a sad and lonely figure, playing alone. "Included" in the party, but segregated by virtue of the fact that without constant adult support, he was unable to effectively communicate with peers who are verbal and do not use and understand signs and symbols. But according to RCC, he doesn't need an EHCP. My point, is that RCC's definition of 'need' does not always reflect children and parents' experience. So to say that 'no children need' The Parks, is in reality "we do now know of any children who in our opinion, the Parks is needed, although they may well feel differently if they knew it was an option."

Just because RCC does not know of children in November that need specialist provision for 10 months later, does not mean that they do not exist. There are few schools, who are full a whole 10 months before an academic year. Firstly, just because you don't know about something, does not mean they don't exist. RCC does not know precisely how many children have a diagnosis of autism, but it does not mean that those children it does not know of simply cease to exist, or do not have their associated needs. Presumably RCC are unaware of

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how many children are on part time timetables, (otherwise surely they would be providing them with full time education), yet ** was on a part time timetable for 3 years without RCC providing him with full time education. Either RCC accept that there are children in mainstream education who are not receiving their entitlement to full time education whom they are failing, or they accept that there are those they don't know about yet clearly still exist. They cannot have it both ways.

I feel that closing The Parks will in fact cost the LA more, as they will need to provide specialist provision at settings across Rutland, rather than enjoying economies of scale of having complex children in one place, sharing resources and expertise. It may cost the LA more in the long run because it will result in more parents seeking specialist, out of county provision. DSP provision is intrinsically for those children who are able to, in a meaningful sense, access mainstream provision - otherwise, it is segregated education. To suggest that a child who is never in lessons with their mainstream peers and has no contact with them except at lunchtime and assembly is included, is absurd. Will all the children and staff at Oakham C of E be trained and continuous users of Makaton so that these children can have meaningful relationships with their peers at breaktime, and lunchtime, and access these lessons? Will small class sizes of 5 (a standard figure for the autism provision at Birchwood) be provided for those children who need very small group sizes in which to learn? Will children who display behaviour that challenges stemming from their diagnoses be welcomed and accepted in mainstream classrooms, when they may shout out, hum, sing, to manage their sensory needs? Will a child who regulates himself by opening and closing doors be permitted to sit by the door, repetitively opening and closing it throughout the lesson? Will children be encouraged to bounce on yoga balls, and regularly leave their seats, in order to move, despite the obvious distraction to other pupils this may cause? Will the teachers all use makaton and adjust their curricula and activities so that minimally speaking children are included? Otherwise, what access to mainstream education will these children realistically have?

There is confusion as to what benefit closing the Parks will achieve. One the one hand, we are told that the funding will go entirely to Oakham C of E to create additional DSP places, but how will the support the children with complex needs who are in mainstream nurseries? Where will these children go when their needs are such that they are a risk to themselves and others without the sort of intensive, continuous support in a quiet environment that the Parks provides. How will nurseries (who are businesses) be compelled to accept children who without highly specialist support pose a risk to themselves and others? How would they keep safe a child who repeatedly and without warning, bangs their head on objects? Or a child who initiates play with other children by hitting or pushing them? Without constant, highly skilled staff? On a pedagogical level, how will nurseries be expected to educate children who are 4 and learning early numeracy and literacy, alongside children who may be non-speaking and communicate their needs physically. How will these children have meaningful, reciprocal relationships with their peers? Would a mainstream school be expected to educate an 5 year old alongside 8 year olds, or 12 year olds alongside 15 year olds, despite their obvious developmental differences? So why would it be acceptable to expect nurseries, who often lack qualified teachers to do this? Ask yourself this - if your child was studying a subject at GCSE, say, physics. But instead of a teacher, the school had support from a visiting advisory physics teacher from the local authority every half term or so, but the rest of the time was taught by somebody with an A-level in geography who had been on a course to 'upskill' them, would you consider that adequate? So why would nursery practitioners, often on the minimum wage, be sufficiently skilled and qualified to teach children who have complex needs requiring bespoke, evolving, highly adaptive packages of support?

There is, to my knowledge, no significant, undisputed evidence basis that mainstream education is a causative factor in better outcomes for children with high level SEND. In fact, children with disabilities are many times more likely to be excluded from mainstream school, which indeed suggests the opposite. If such evidence exists, it has not been presented, and runs counter to the findings in "The Inclusion Illusion", by Webster (UCL)

"Based on the UK's largest observation study of pupils with high-level SEND, *The Inclusion Illusion* exposes how attendance at a mainstream school is no guarantee of receiving a mainstream education. Observations of nearly 1,500 lessons in English schools show that their everyday experience of school is characterised by separation and segregation. Furthermore, interviews with nearly 500 pupils, parents and school staff reveal the effect of this marginalisation on the quality of their education. The way schools are organised and how classrooms are composed creates a form of 'structural exclusion' that preserves mainstream education for typically-developing pupils and justifies a diluted pedagogical offer for pupils with high-level SEND. Policymakers, not mainstream schools, are indicted over the state of affairs."

Under the model proposed for the DSP at Oakham C of E, there would be significant numbers of children who access little, if any, mainstream education. Clearly, this is more likely to be for children with the most profound and complex needs, such as those catered for by The Parks, who are not able to access mainstream classroom-based education.

Leicester City Council state that:

DSPs provide specialist provision for specific types of special needs as part of mainstream school or academy. Children who are placed in DSPs do not require full time specialist provision but require some additional specialist support to access the curriculum. Their time is split between mainstream lessons and activities and the DSP. [Designated Specialist Provision \(DSP\) | Leicester City](#)

Clearly, there is a positive selection bias in favour of mainstream education (more able children tend to be placed there, who would achieve better outcomes regardless). However, the metrics in terms of outcomes are often limited, and my understanding is that there is within the literature no consensus that mainstream provision where children access few, if any, mainstream classes, results in better outcomes for children - academically, socially, and emotionally. I am concerned that educational psychology has not been consulted and provided a report into the proposed change and explained how the needs of complex children requiring the Parks will be met in the mainstream available, and that the mainstream nursery provision available and the DSP presents provision that is "as good, if not better" than the Parks.

Furthermore, how will vulnerable, disabled children who are not able to access mainstream nurseries because of challenging behavior or complex needs be safeguarded? Do we not run the risk that they will in fact have higher long term needs in the absence of intensive early intervention, thus requiring longer, more intensive specialist education.

Closing The Parks may also have a disproportionately large impact on women, who, in the absence of appropriate children for their children with complex needs, may (as more often the primary carer) suffer a loss of income both short and long term if they are forced to stay at home and care for the children. Has an equality impact assessment been done to consider the?

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Have local specialist provisions (all of which are full beyond capacity) been consulted to consider the impact it will have on them? Have they been consulted as specialists as to whether they think mainstream provision is suitable for the sort of children who need to access The Parks? Furthermore, there is a financial risk that an organisation may enter Rutland / a neighboring local authority and set up an independent specialist primary provision which could offer the sort of small class sizes and specialist provision that many complex children need. Given the high levels of success in parents achieving their chosen placement, the could in fact cost the LA more in the long run because Independent Special schools are *extremely* expensive, and in the absence of any LA specialist primary schools, and the local maintained ones being heavily over subscribed, parents would have a very strong case. The local authority knows this, as they spend hundreds of thousands of pounds every year on independent specialist placements, both in and out of Rutland.

Parents have a very good success rate of getting their chosen school whenever they are prepared to challenge RCC at tribunal, which more will do if the Parks is not available to reassure parents that their needs can be met in Rutland. RCC is one of a handful of local authorities who choose to pay solicitors and barristers tens of thousands of pounds to oppose unrepresented parents, yet the number of appeals found in favour of the LA and not upheld or conceded prior to hearing is extremely small. My home insurance does not provide legal cover unless I have a "reasonable" chance of success (more than 50%), yet my understanding is that of the appeals not conceded by the LA, the tribunal upholds the appeal in over 90% of cases. Yet however impoverished the LA is, when faced with parent-carers of disabled children without legal representation, it feels a need for teams of legally qualified personelle.

I urge the local authority to reconsider their decision, and explore ways to make The Parks sustainable, rather than leaping to a forgone conclusion and closing it. Independent specialist schools are often over-subscribed and run with very positive financial margins, so there is no reason to think that specialist provision is intrinsically nonviable in financial terms. There are so many significant risks in the plan, yet so many opportunities to use what is an "outstanding" school so much better. I truly believe that the conclusion RCC has reached is ill-conceived and highly short-termist, and will deliver poorer outcomes not just for children and families across Rutland and the wider area, but for Rutland County Council.

*** Identifying personal details*

75 3/12/23

I write to you as a Rutland resident and parent of a child with additional needs. It is essential that The Parks remains running to serve our community, I strongly disagree with the proposal to close The Parks.

76 3/12/23

I am a retired teacher who was based in London schools for 38 years. I have a long term interest in SEND provision and have closely followed the debate regarding the Parks nursery.

My observations are as below

It is reported that over the past 2 years, RCC have introduced the requirements of an EHCP as a criteria of admission. Despite this not being a statutory requirement. Given the children are typically admitted for two years only, the need for an EHCP as a condition of admission would seem to place a clear obstacle to entry.

It seems the assessment of likely future need is based on current numbers, I believe this is 3

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	<p>pupils, no reference is made in these numbers to Forces families who have been regular users of the Parks. These families move around so demand will vary.</p> <p>The BBC Today programme 29 November 2023 reported the UK is experiencing a significant demand for SEND provision.</p> <p>The latest OFSTED report on the Parks was based on far higher pupil numbers (10) than the current.</p> <p>FOI 10123/23 confirms the county has seen an increase in out-of-county placement from January 21 to October 23, from 100 to 144.</p> <p>I would question how rigorous the assessment of numbers has been.</p> <p>I would now like to turn to the formulation of the proposal.</p> <p>I believe a group of SEND professionals have been reviewing the Parks since 2019. A working group comprising of RCC, members of the staff of the CofE, the Parks and the parent governors concluded the current provision of the Parks was not fit for purpose and it would be in the best interest of both the Children and Parents if future provision targeted a wider group of children including those with special needs.</p> <p>Parents I have spoken to believe the Parks operates as an independently managed RCC funded specialist nursery school. However the ending of the Parks provision will only allow an increase of 1 DSP place.</p> <p>I therefore can only assume less provision of SEND to those who need it will be a result of the closure of the Parks.</p> <p>Therefore please record this as my objection to the proposal.</p>
77	<p>3/12/23</p> <p>As the parent of ** I support inclusive education and opportunity but also believe that there remains a place for alternative specialist provision where this is the most appropriate setting in which to meet an individual child's needs.</p> <p>It is odd that RCC is choosing to close a provision which is rated by Ofsted as an Outstanding provision, a provision which 'helps children to be the best they can be'. I wonder, how does RCC plan to engage another provision which is likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of educational provision for these children? (Annex C; DfE guidance on closing schools). In addition how does RCC propose to ensure that the proposed arrangements to ensure the expertise and specialism continues to be available? (Annex C; DfE guidance on closing schools).</p> <p>As a family we experienced the genuine love, care and concern the staff at The Parks show for all their pupils. They supported us as we started our journey as a disabled family, supported us during our dark moments and provided a safe place where we could express our feelings and emotions as we learnt to accept that our journey was going to be different to others. Our ** siblings were as much a part of The Parks Family as we were as parents and they too were well supported. Over **years later we maintain strong friendships with other local parents and families. Our ** is a valued member of the Rutland community as The Parks was, and still is, a valued and loved part of the wider community.</p>

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	<p>RCC, please think again before you finalise the proposal - stressed, distressed and exhausted parents already have to leave the county to access the majority of their child's specialist health services; please don't make them do this to access specialist early education as well.</p> <p>Work with The Parks School to maintain and develop it's outstanding and unique services, not to close it.</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details</i></p>
78	<p>3/12/23</p> <p>I wish to record my dismay at the proposal to close such an outstanding and much needed facility. I do not have any personal experience of the school but have friends whose children have attended there. I do not believe that there aren't enough children in Rutland who are in need of the expertise that only the specialist staff there can provide. There is so much new housing being built and within the increased population there will be more children with special needs. Other authorities in the country are recognizing that the number of children with special needs is growing and are catering for them, Rutland isn't any different.</p> <p>These children cannot cope in mainstream education, it isn't fair to them and it's not fair to the mainstream children either. With the best will in the world there won't be sufficient/satisfactory support for them and everyone will suffer as a result. If the closure results in children being sent out of county that will be disastrous for them and their families.</p> <p>It has been suggested that the Parks School is undersubscribed currently because it has been made so difficult for anyone to be referred. I do hope there isn't any truth in this.</p>
79	<p>3/12/23</p> <p>I am a Rutland resident with a ** with SEND. I would like to register that I strongly disagree with the proposal to close the Parks. As a parent of a child with SEND needs I feel it is important to have this special provision for early years as early intervention can make a large difference. Based on personal experience, private sector nurseries (even ones that excel in most areas) are not fully equipped manage children with the special needs.</p> <p>Whilst for several years I pushed for my child to access mainstream (non-designated provision) education - it didn't work and I believe this has had a lasting impact on his mental wellbeing. I firmly believe that it is important to have educational provision with carers/educators that have the right skills and understanding that can make a lasting impact. This is just not feasible across a large diverse range of nurseries and childminders.</p> <p>The mental impact on parents of not having effective support is substantial and the ability to provide the type of provision can make a large difference to both parental wellbeing and economic productivity.</p> <p><i>** Identifying personal details</i></p>
80	<p>3/12/23</p> <p>I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express my concerns regarding the recent announcement of the closure of the sole special school within the Oakham area, The Parks Special School. As a parent of an ** child with Down's syndrome, I am very worried about the potential repercussions this closure might have on children in our community who require specialised education and support.</p> <p>The geographical isolation of Oakham already poses significant challenges for families seeking specialised educational services. The absence of an alternative nearby school will necessitate</p>

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extensive travel, placing an unfair and impractical burden on families and our children. For many of us, this distance is not just a matter of inconvenience but a significant barrier that could severely disrupt our children's education and well-being. Transporting our children long distances daily to access suitable educational facilities not only poses logistical challenges but also significantly impacts their routine, comfort, and ability to thrive in an educational setting conducive of their needs. The stress and fatigue associated with extended travel are not suitable for children with additional needs and could hinder their progress and development.

I urge you to consider the long-term consequences of this decision on the children who rely on the specialised services provided by The Park Special School. It is crucial to ensure that suitable alternatives or provisions are in place to guarantee the uninterrupted support and education these children deserve. I kindly request an opportunity for concerned parents, educational professionals, and relevant stakeholders to engage in discussions aimed at finding viable solutions or alternative arrangements that prioritize the welfare and educational needs of children with additional needs in our community.

Your attention to this matter is greatly appreciated, and I am hopeful that together, we can explore options that will safeguard the educational rights and well-being of children with special needs in our area.

Thank you for your consideration.

The following was received as an attachment with representation numbers 8 and 48.

The 'Save The Parks Team' Response to RCCs Questions and answers section of The Parks Proposal 24/11/23 (response in blue)

1. Will our voices be heard?

Yes. Public consultation on the Parks Special Nursery School is running from 1 November to 3 December 2023. All responses we receive via our dedicated consultation email address during this period will be considered. The Council has enlisted Maureen Morris to support the consultation and provide an independent overview of the process. Maureen is a parent-carer herself and has worked as a parent participation consultant nationally for a number of years, as well as being an associate of the charity **Contact for families with disabled children**.

• RCC were asked for further clarification on the process the responses are below:

- Please can you clarify what the process is on the consultation?

The statutory process of closing a maintained school is set out by the Department for Education: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1131568/Opening_and_closing_maintained_schools_Jan_2023.pdf

The consultation on the proposal commences with a public launch of the proposal. The proposal is then published in key places that are accessible to the community. The Council invites representations, comments and questions during a period of 30 days through an agreed and published route to the Council. All comments, representation and questions are logged. All responses received by email and other formats are being read by Maureen Morris, an external independent consultant. Councillors are receiving regular briefings regarding residents' questions and responses. Councillors are also having their own questions responded to.

- What is the 'process' that Maureen Morris will be independently overviewing

Maureen Morris, the external independent consultant, is reviewing the comments, questions and responses as they come in, and she will take into account the impact on the author, the number of responses and the themes raised to compile a report. Maureen Morris is providing an independent view on the consultation process and the comments that come in. She has been fully informed of the launch, the content of the proposal and sees all entries to the Council. She is asking questions of the Council as they arise. From this, a report will be created and presented to Rutland County Council Cabinet which will be published in advance of the Cabinet meeting. The Cabinet will then make a decision on the proposal. The outcome of that decision

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will be published within a week of the decision.

The DfE Guidance states that the local authority will be the decision maker on a school closure proposal and that within one week of making a decision, they MUST publish their decision and the reasons for such a decision being made on their website.

- *What do you mean by responses will be considered? How are responses to the consultation*

analysed and used to inform the final decision on the proposal?

Each comment or question is considered by Council Officers and by Maureen Morris. Key themes, impact on the community and the number of responses will inform the report that will go to Cabinet.

- *So if Mr X sends an email then what happens? And how is this used to inform the decision?*

As above.

- *Will councillors see all emails?*

A log of all emails is kept, and Councillors can see these if they request to do so. Councillors are also submitting questions and comments on behalf of constituents and are receiving responses.

- *Will parts of emails be used (if so who decides which bits to ignore?)*

All the comments representation and questions will be used.

- *Or is it just that a number of people have opposed?*

No, the content of the representations, comments and questions will be considered.

● We are awaiting responses on:

- what qualification does the independent consultant hold in order for her to analyse that data and what type of analysis is she using?

- If she isn't using one, who is and what qualifications do they hold?

● RCC, we've got to say that we find the answers you've given intending to clarify the process are still actually rather confusing and unclear!

● On one hand you say responses will be looked at for themes to compile a report (which infers that responses and comments will not be passed on in full) then at the end you state all the comments, representations and questions will be used. But how? If this was an EHCP you'd be in trouble for not being specific!

● Also, have all councillors been made aware that they will have to request to see emails?

2. Who has been involved in developing this proposal?

An experienced group of independent SEND professionals has been reviewing the special provision at The Parks Nursery School since 2019. This has been done to examine the current arrangements and make sure they are fit for purpose, or plan for a future delivery model.

Following on from this review, a working group made of Council officers, The Parks staff, Oakham Primary School teaching staff and leadership, as well as parent governors, was set up to develop a more inclusive Early Years offer for Rutland, targeting a wider group of children including those with additional needs.

● The school is called Oakham C of E Primary School - not Oakham Primary School

● Oakham C of E Press Release - 'As it is a Local Authority school, the decision to consult on the future of The Parks School has been made solely by the Local Authority. We believe that for a number of years, The Parks School has and still continues to provide outstanding care and provision for children and families across Rutland. Some of our most vulnerable local children, many with significant learning and medical needs or disabilities, have benefited from enriching opportunities and the professionalism, dedication and love from our school staff team. Whatever the outcome of the consultation and any resulting decision by the Local Authority, our overarching aim is to support our staff team and ensure that, in whatever form, we still have an integral role in ensuring all local children with additional needs and disabilities have their specific needs met locally.'

● How were the 'independent' SEND consultants found? What was the tendering process?

Who paid the consultancy fees? How much were they paid? (and is this money that could have helped SEND children?!) Which 'pot' did the consultancy fees come out of?

Did anyone at RCC previously know the consultants or recommend them? Were they

REALLY independent?

3. How much does it cost to run the Parks and what would you do with this money?

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The funding for Special Needs education and provision comes from the High Needs Fund (HNF), which is part of the Dedicated Schools Budget. The HNF is currently running at a deficit of £1.3million. The Parks has a Minimum Funding Guarantee of £250,719 for 7.5 places. This is to ensure the school and the provision has sufficient funding to maintain a safe learning environment for students. This money will not be taken away from the school but will be used to enhance the offer at Oakham Primary School. This will be done by increasing the number of places in the school's Designated Special Provision (DSP) from September 2024.

- It is 7.5 full time equivalent places so can be up to 15 children on roll part time.
- The minimum funding guarantee was only put in place 1/4/22 prior to this the school was actually underfunded.
- Both the top-up and place funding has been static for the last 10+ years and has not kept pace with increasing expenditure such as general inflation, staffing annual pay awards, significant pension increases, the significant realignment of support staff pay scales in line with the living wage etc. This has resulted in the school living off its reserves brought forward. The place funding is centrally set and has been fixed at £10k for many years so up until 1/4/22 the school received maximum funding of £75,000 (7.5FTE x £10k). In order to be fair, ensure quality and sustainability, surely the funding should be responsive to inflationary factors which **ALL** other schools receive as part of their entitlement through the national funding formula and independent providers receive through their price increases. The Parks does **NOT** benefit from this. RCC is able to add an inflationary factor to the top-up funding each year to ensure The Parks school is not disadvantaged compared to other schools or independent providers to avoid a diminishing base line. This is why an MFG had to be agreed to make the provision sustainable.
- It is only fair to give **ALL** of the information to ghs public as the response you have given insinuates that The Parks is at least 20% responsible for the high needs deficit which is simply not true!
- The parks **SAVES** the council money in the long term as early intervention at The Parks fast tracks children's development allowing many children to then access the local DSP rather than needing specialist out of county primary provision.
- HNF is paid for from the national budget allocation for mainstream Rutland schools. It can be accessed for any child without an EHCP attending a mainstream Rutland School. It is also used for supporting Rutland children with an EHCP who are educated in or out of county in mainstream or specialist provisions.
- The High Needs Block only covers children's placement or support costs. It does not meet the costs associated with legal challenge, assessment costs, travel costs etc. which is met by the Local Authority. (Per schools forum 17/6/21)
- Are RCC really going to pay the DSP £250,719 to extend? Or is this another error?

4. Will Early Years providers be able to cope with the influx of children who would have gone to the Parks, if the special nursery closes?

There are currently no nursery age children at the Parks Nursery Special School. All children currently at the Parks are of school age (Reception) and may be supported in Oakham Primary School's Designated Special Provision (DSP). In the previous two academic years, there were no more than three nursery age children attending the Parks, all of whom did so on a part time basis. Looking ahead, we are not aware of any children of nursery age needing specialist nursery provision from September 2024. This means there would be no increase in the number of children needing nursery places in mainstream settings if The Parks provision were to close.


- There are children who's families want to access the parks - for both nursery and foundation stage (it's not called reception anymore!). We have a list of some if RCC would like to see it?
- A Local SEN support group for under 5s has repeatedly told RCC staff they are full and have a waiting list - so RCC must know there are nursery age children who want to and could access The Parks.
- Since starting the consultation another child has started at The Parks – demonstrating how intake can fluctuate through the year it is not always a September start date.

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- Nurseries have come forward and said they have recently submitted paperwork for a number of children they believe need to access The Parks.
- There used to be waiting lists for The Parks school when children just had to have an identified need as criteria for entry, the staff then assisted in applying for an ehcp with evidence from the plan/do/review cycles. Since RCC put in the barrier to entry of children must have an ehcp it has been nearly impossible for young children to access the provision. Children are on waiting lists for ASD pathways, to see paediatricians and other professionals so they are unable to get diagnosis, or support, or an ehcp to access The Parks provision which they do desperately need!
- Expecting parents to sort out an ehcp when they are struggling to come to terms with their child's needs and just trying to survive is both ludicrous and cruel. Especially when RCC is attempting to reduce the number of EHCPs it issues to children. If they can't get an EHCP how can they get a place?
- Putting that barrier to entry in has stopped access and reduced numbers - intentionally to run The Parks down to close it?
- The Parks also used to take children from out of county. This again was stopped.
- Closing The Parks could also prevent parents from being able to work!
- With all the new housing developments bringing new families into the area surely it is common sense that some of those new families are likely to have SEN children? Especially as one family has already stated one of the reasons they moved to Rutland was to access The Parks school for their vulnerable child.

5. How can nurseries and childminders afford to support children with SEND without this having an impact on other children?

The number of children in mainstream nurseries or with a childminder would not change if the Parks were to close. This is because there are currently no nursery aged children attending The Parks. From January 2024, the local authority is making additional funding available for nurseries and childminders, so they can offer SEND support to wider range of children. This will allow the sector to provide additional support at the earliest opportunity and improve the long-term outcomes for our children with special educational needs and disabilities. Rutland County Council continues to provide this inclusion funding at a significantly higher rate than neighbouring local authorities.

- This is ridiculous - if The Parks can take 7.5-15 children each year and that setting is closed of course the number of children in mainstream nurseries would increase!
- SENif funding to nurseries and childminders has in real terms been reduced due to the new banding system. Where a child would have received £300 for 1:1 support (£10 x 30 hours) they may now receive as little as £60 (£2 x 30 hours). So what is this additional funding?
- Nurseries and childminder do currently identify needs at the earliest opportunity and provide what support they can - they then often have to apply for an ehcp to try and get children a place at The Parks as they cannot give the level of intervention/support required due to lack of funding/support.
- Private nurseries are independent business therefore as such of they are unable to meet the needs of children or do not have capacity they can refuse to take children (as long as it is not discrimination).
- Are RCC going to fund all mainstream settings to make adaptations such as hygiene rooms with hoists, specialist toilet frames, extra rooms built which they can then have a small number of children, train staff on tube feeding, sensory diets etc - so that they can meet the needs of children. Or will it end up in a years time having to create a setting that has all this - oh wait a minute like The Parks 
- Everyone in a civilised society wants inclusion but this isn't it. No matter what you do mainstream is not in the best interest of many children. And this should be about what is in the best interest of the children - not what you think you should do to be more inclusive. By taking this route of inclusivity you will be excluding the most vulnerable children from access to an early years education.
- Early intervention through The Parks gives children the best opportunity for success and optimises their chances of local inclusion later in their school career.

6. How do you know that nurseries and childminders have the facilities and expertise to support children with SEND?

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The expertise of Rutland nurseries is growing rapidly and is currently the best it's ever been, following support from our Early Years SEN Specialist Teacher. Nurseries and childminders can contact the Specialist Teacher at any point. They have also identified and provided bespoke training for mainstream practitioners, to help meet the needs of children with SEND. The Council's Inclusion Team is providing more targeted support for nurseries and childminders who care for children with the most complex needs. A Schools Support Partnership (SSP) has also been set up to promote inclusion in all schools in Rutland. The Partnership provides support for Speech, Language and Communication needs (SLC), advice for settings, training for all staff in the identification of SLC needs, ideas for promoting good SLC development and strategies for supporting children experiencing difficulties or delays. Rutland County Council also continues to fund training for Rutland Early Years practitioners from entry level inclusion training to Level 3 inclusive practice training, alongside a wide range of courses from quality trainers, such as Dingley's Promise and Nasen. More than 70 Early Years practitioners have now accessed inclusion training with Dingley's Promise. The Disability Access Fund remains available for nurseries and childminders to use for children claiming Disability Living Allowance. This helps settings to provide the facilities or make adaptations and adjustments to their environment to ensure accessibility for children with additional needs.

- Have you ever tried to claim DLA for a child under 5 (or even a child over 5)? I suggest not! It is incredibly difficult to get DLA awarded, so, in reality nurseries and childminders will not be able to access The Disability Access Fund so you are effectively pushing more and more costs onto them when the sector is already struggling to remain financially sustainable. And ultimately adaptations won't be made so children will not be able to attend.
- It is good to hear that more SEN training for nurseries and childminders is happening, however surely this is something that should happen anyway and should not rely on closing the only suitable alternative provision to do this!
- The SSP (formerly known as the EIP) was established in February 2020 and while there are some success stories it is also failing some of the most vulnerable children. RCCs intent to make the SSP support package look more attractive than the support a child will get with an ehcp to deter families from applying for an ehcp is abhorrent! And where the support has failed children and families have suffered trauma for years and having to apply for ehcps themselves in order to access a suitable provision - the ehcp process is a minimum of 20 weeks so what do they do in that time? While we understand that you need to allow strategies time to try and work, you also need to react quicker when schools and families are telling you it is not working! RCC are currently inflicting school based trauma on many children.
- Placing children who cannot access any of the mainstream educational opportunities, nor form meaningful reciprocal relationships with their peers in mainstream classes, is seclusion, not inclusion.

7. How many under-fives in Rutland have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plan and how many have been refused an assessment or Plan in the past three years?

There are currently 11 Rutland children under the age of five (Nursery and Reception age) with EHC Plans. A further two children under the age of five are currently being assessed. In the past three years, we have refused to assess one child under five for an EHC Plan. This initial decision was eventually reviewed and a needs assessment was carried out. We have not refused to issue any EHC Plans to children under five years of age during the past three years. There are currently no children of nursery age being assessed for an EHC Plan and none being appealed.

- This data is not current - there are a number of nursery age children who have submitted ehcp assessment requests. There are also further families who should have been advised to request an assessment but haven't been.
- The parents of the child you refused to assess had to threaten tribunal to get you to change your mind and assess. This isn't something RCC chose to do even though they should have.

8. Does this mean young children with SEND won't get the education they have a right to?

Children with special educational needs and disabilities will continue to receive the right care and support in Early Years settings, whatever the outcome of this consultation. As a Local Authority, we have a legal duty under Section 27 of the Children & Families Act 2014 to keep under review the educational, training and social care provision made for children and young people with SEND. We

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must consider the extent to which the education, training and social care provision is sufficient to meet the educational, training and social care needs of the children and young people with SEND. As we have referenced already, a recent Local Area Inspection by Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission reviewed the Rutland's provision for children with additional needs and found these services to be among the best anywhere in the country.

- In the ofsted only 2 parents were spoken to - so how is that a true reflection?
- If you take away The Parks school there will not be sufficient APPROPRIATE placement for the SEN and disabled children of Rutland.

9. Will children who would have gone to the Parks now have to go out of county, with the associated transport costs?

We want to increase opportunities for children with SEND or emerging needs to access mainstream Early Years education closer to home. This would reduce the need for long journeys and give children with additional needs the opportunity to form friendships with other local children their age. The Designated Specialist Provision (DSP) at Oakham Primary School will be equipped to meet the needs of many of our Rutland children who may have previously attended The Parks Nursery Special School in Reception or Year 1. Our mainstream schools are also rapidly developing their expertise as part of Rutland's School Support Partnership (SSP). In addition to this, several primary schools are now creating more flexible mainstream offers of

provision to meet children's needs and are doing so effectively and inclusively. As a result, there are lots more opportunities for children who may have attended The Parks in the past to access and thrive in a mainstream setting. Rutland County Council does not expect the number of children travelling outside of the county for specialist provision to change. This remains a very low number of Early Years aged children. There are currently no Rutland children of nursery age and just three children in Reception or Year 1 attending out of county specialist provision.

- Children who would have attended The Parks will end up having to go out of county -maybe not at nursery age but when they reach statutory school age. Ultimately when the most vulnerable Childrens needs can not be met in mainstream nursery the child will end up staying at home until they are old enough to access an out of county specialist provision. The specialised early intervention received at The Parks can fast track children's development allowing many children to then access the local DSP rather than needing specialist out of county primary provision (at a high placement and transport cost)
- By closing The Parks you will be preventing many children from accessing suitable provision close to home.
- If you truly want SEN children to be able to access provision close to home then do what families have been screaming out for for many years - build an SEN provision for Rutlands children! If by any chance it isn't full (which is highly unlikely) other counties can pay RCC for places for their children bringing funds into the county.
- 1023/23 - FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST shows that out of county placements are steadily increasing - Jan 2021 100 children, Jan 2022 128 children, Oct 2023 144 children. It also states this is at a cost of over **£7.8 million** over the last 3 years (not including transport costs). This figure may even be **understated?** given that the oakham based Independent Special provision (The Shires) has a base cost of £80k -£90k per child per year! And some of the settings children from Rutland currently have placements at are a mix of other county maintained, independent schools, boarding schools, distance wise as close as melton to as far as the Isle of Wight.
- We wholeheartedly believe that all children with SEND should be allowed to access the provision which is most suitable for them, wherever that may be. However, as Rutland does not have its own full special school families are not given that option. As a recent RCC parent/education survey showed families really want their children educated close to home - this does not mean families want their children in mainstream!
- Rutland SEND families want a special school in Rutland so that children can be educated close to home in an appropriate setting with the correct approach/equipment/training etc

10. What is the Designated Specialist Provision (DSP) and how will they support the reception children who used to stay in the Parks?

The Designated Specialist Provision (DSP) is part of Oakham Primary School, which is an academy in The Rutland Learning Trust. It caters for children whose special educational needs and/or

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disabilities require specialist support over and above that which a mainstream school can normally provide as part of an EHC Plan. The DSP provides care and support for pupils from Reception, Key Stage 1 and 2. The DSP is designed to enable primary phase children with SEND, who require specialist and individualised support, to continue to access and experience mainstream education by offering them the opportunity to access aspects of the mainstream curriculum, the internal environment and the external environment of a mainstream school as

appropriate. They do this while continuing to receive individualised specialist support within designated DSP facilities. The DSP supports children with the following Special Educational Needs:

- Cognition and Learning - children with learning difficulties which are persistent over time, pervasive across the curriculum and which affect, alter or slow their learning.
- Communication and Interaction needs - children with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) and have difficulty in communicating with others. This may be because they have difficulty saying what they want to, understanding what is being said to them or they do not understand or use social rules of communication. The profile for every child with SLCN is different and their needs may change over time. Like the Parks Special Nursery, Oakham Primary School's DSP is not intended to provide support to children who have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties, who are likely to have significant levels of support requirements across all areas of special educational needs and daily care. The provision may support children whose special educational needs might also require emotional and behavioural support and wider adaptation. This includes children with low to moderate behavioural support and sensory needs and may include children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) with additional cognition and learning needs. An explicit ambition of

the DSP provision is that children will have increased opportunity to access learning and social opportunities alongside their mainstream peers as an integral part of the mainstream school community. Oakham Primary School facilitate access to support as part of an EHC Plan, if required. This includes Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists, Educational Psychologists and Speech and Language Therapists, to ensure provision is appropriate to the individual needs of children. There is also a dedicated family liaison officer who provides support for families and works closely with the staff at Rutland County Council's Family Hub.

• **AGAIN THE SCHOOL IS CALLED OAKHAM C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL** if you can't even get the school name correct what hope is there!

• What happens when a child starts at the DSP but it then becomes apparent they cannot meet need? We understand that RCC has noticed children in this situation previously? If so this is not in the best interest if the child, the school, the staff or the other children?

• Over the last few years the level of needs that children have who access the DSP have changed and some might say increased. This has resulted in the DSP changing. In the past it had 2 classrooms (room 1 as a quiet autism unit and room 2 for moderate learning disabilities, ASD not primarily requiring quiet, and everything else). The DSP has since had to be restructured to have 3 pathways to better meet the needs of the children now accessing - with an informal, semi formal and formal pathway. The informal pathway focusing more on life skills and non mainstream curriculum learning. The DSP has had to change significantly in order to try to meet the needs of the children, yet RCC still want to treat it as a mainstream provision.

• The DSP is not an equivalent to The Parks. The Parks Special School is a specialist provision, the Designated Special Provision (DSP), which is intended to fit in between specialist and mainstream, is legally classed as mainstream provision.

Leicester city council describe DSPs as "DSPs provide specialist provision for specific types of special needs as part of mainstream school or academy. Children who are placed in DSPs do not require full time specialist provision but require some additional specialist support to access the curriculum. Their time is split between mainstream lessons and activities and the DSP."

<https://mychoice.leicester.gov.uk/Categories/387>

Similarly, Leicestershire describe enhanced resource schools as;

"Enhanced resource schools are mainstream schools with additional resources for particular children with an Education, Health and Care Plan, where there is more specialist support and staff. Pupils are not generally taught separately and are included in the mainstream classes."

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disability/education-and-childcare/send-support-in-schools/choosing-and-applying-for-a-school-for-a-child-with-special-educational-needs-or-disability-send>

11. How can I be sure my child will be supported as well in the Designated Special Provision as they would have been in The Parks?

The Parks Special Nursery School and the DSP occupy the same building and much of the space is already shared between the two provisions. This includes a swimming pool, which is used by children from The Parks and the DSP. Many of the staff, including the leadership team, already work across both The Parks and the DSP, ensuring the skills and expertise will remain.

The funding used to support the running The Parks Special Nursery would not be taken away if the provision were to close. Instead, it would be used to further enhance the offer at Oakham Primary School, including the DSP.

- On one hand RCC say the money saved on The Parks will be spread amongst the other settings to improve inclusivity, yet on the Q&As it states ‘£250,719 - This money will not be taken away from the school but will be used to enhance the offer at Oakham Primary School. This will be done by increasing the number of places in the school’s Designated Special Provision (DSP) from September 2024’

- So which is it?
- Are RCC really going to pay the DSP £250,719 to extend? Or is this another error.
- Just because The Parks and the DSP occupy the same building does not mean that they provide the same. The Parks is registered as a special school, whereas the DSP is legally a mainstream provision.

12. What kind of wider support will be available to parents and families of children with additional needs, if The Parks were to close?

As well as support and signposting from individual nurseries, Rutland’s Family Hub has a range of support groups for parents. This includes an Autism Support Group, Triple P ‘Stepping Stones’ parenting programme for the parents of children with SEND, as well as play and learning activities for children with developmental needs, such as the Let’s Get Talking programme or Space to Play. Full details can be found **on our Family Hub website**, by calling **01572 758 383** or by emailing:

familyhub@rutland.gov.uk Oakham Primary school also has a Family Liaison Officer available to families with children in the Dedicated Special Provision, from

Reception to Year 6. Where children with SEND are not attending a nursery or childminder setting, Rutland County Council’s Early Years Inclusion team provides support via home visits.

- Parental feedback is that the new Family Liaison Officer at **Oakham c of E school** has been a fantastic addition - increasing easy quicker access to support and answers, and freeing up some of the DSP staffs time more.
- The support groups and courses listed above already exist and have done for some time. They are mostly not SEND specific also.
- Surely the support stated in the RCC answer is available regardless of if The Parks is closed - or will this support be removed if The Parks remains open?
- Parental feedback also tells us that as most of a families battles over support and provision for their SEN child end up being with the local authority they are not always keen to attend sessions/groups that are linked to RCC.
- The local self funded SEN independent support group for under 5s is full with a waiting list.
- Playgroups do not give families respite! Children under 5 do not qualify for RCCs short break scheme so unless they have friends/family locally who are capable of looking after their child or they are able to access a **suitable** provision they get no respite from their parent caring role.
- When you have a child with additional needs this is not something you expect or plan for and the life you anticipated with your child is often quickly taken away leaving parents in shock .. and then feeling guilty. Parents need to be able to make connections with other parents who truly ‘get it’ parents who are going through similar experiences. They also need to be able to feel that their child is being looked after in a suitable environment that is safe to meet their child’s unique needs so that as an exhausted parent they can actually get a chance to breathe!
- Therefore closing The Parks will remove a valuable support to many families