Understanding Specialist Resource Bases: A Guide for Parents, Carers and the Wider Community

Why Have We Written This Guide?

When schools consult on proposals to develop Specialist Resource Bases, we know many parents and community members are unfamiliar with what this means.

This guide has been written to:

- Explain clearly and simply what a Resource Base is;
- Reassure families about how schools operate with Resource Bases;
- Answer common questions and concerns;
- Support you to engage confidently with consultation proposals.

What Is a Specialist Resource Base?

A Specialist Resource Base is a small, specialist provision within a mainstream school.

It supports pupils who:

- Have additional or complex special educational needs;
- May find it difficult to access learning in a typical classroom without extra support;
- Benefit from specialist strategies, staff expertise, or a more structured environment.

Children placed in a Resource Base are fully on roll at the school and are part of the school community.

Is a Resource Base the same as a Special School?

No.

A Resource Base is not a special school.

Instead, it:

- Is part of a mainstream school;
- Supports inclusion rather than separation;
- Allows pupils to access mainstream activities where appropriate;
- Provides targeted specialist support alongside mainstream education.

The aim is to help pupils succeed within a mainstream setting, with the right level of additional support.

How Do Resource Bases Work Day to Day?

While every Resource Base is tailored to the needs of its pupils, they generally include:

- A dedicated learning space designed to meet specific needs;
- Specialist staff, including teachers and support staff with relevant training;
- Individualised timetables based on each pupil's needs.

Depending on the pupil, they may:

- Learn in the Resource Base for part or most of the school day;
- Join mainstream lessons, activities or social times;
- Take part fully in school assemblies, trips and wider school life.

The balance between specialist and mainstream provision is carefully planned and regularly reviewed.

Who Attends a Resource Base?

Pupils are placed in Resource Bases through the Local Authority.

Children typically:

- Have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP);
- Have needs that cannot be fully met through mainstream provision alone;
- Are carefully matched to the Resource Base to ensure it is the right provision.

Resource Bases usually open gradually and grow to a planned number of places over time.

Will a Resource Base Affect Other Pupils?

For most pupils, day-to-day school life will not change.

Resource Base places are additional and do not reduce mainstream places. Class sizes are not increased and teaching, routines and expectations for mainstream pupils remain the same.

Schools with Resource Bases often find that:

- Staff understanding of SEND improves;
- Inclusive practice strengthens across the school;
- Children benefit from growing up in a community that values difference and inclusion.

Who Works in a Resource Base?

Staff working in Resource Bases include:

- Qualified teachers, often with experience of teaching in Specialist settings
- Trained support staff

- Practitioners with specialist expertise relevant to the needs being supported

Schools also work closely with:

- Educational Psychologists
- Speech and Language Therapists
- Occupational Therapists and other professionals, where appropriate

All staff operate under the school's safeguarding policies and are part of the wider school team.

Where Are Resource Bases Located?

Resource Bases are:

- Located on mainstream school sites;
- Often in adapted or designated areas within the school;
- Designed to provide a calm, supportive environment while remaining connected to school life.

Any building adaptations are carefully planned and subject to approval processes.

Why Do Schools Develop Resource Bases?

Schools and Multi-Academy Companies develop Resource Bases in response to:

- Growing demand for specialist SEND provision;
- A desire to meet needs locally, reducing travel for families;
- Local Authority SEND Sufficiency needs;
- A commitment to inclusive education.

Resource Bases allow schools to support more children effectively and sustainably within their community.

Does My Child Have Automatic or Priority Access to the Resource Base if They Attend the School?

No.

Attending a mainstream school that hosts a Specialist Resource Base does not give a child automatic or priority access to the Resource Base.

Placements to a Resource Base are made through a formal process.

This means that:

- Children must meet specific criteria linked to the purpose of that particular Resource Base;
- Placements are considered based on a child's identified special educational needs, usually set out in an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP);

- Each Resource Base is designed to meet particular types of need, and not all SEND profiles will be appropriate for every Resource Base;
- Decisions are made through a careful consultation and naming process, involving professionals and families.

Children who already attend the mainstream school where the Resource Base is located:

- Do not receive priority
- Are not automatically eligible
- Would follow the same formal process as any other child

This ensures that Resource Base places are allocated fairly, transparently and appropriately, so that the provision meets the needs of the children it is designed for.

How Does This Fit With Our Catholic Ethos?

As a Catholic Multi-Academy Company, we believe that:

- Every child is created with dignity and purpose;
- Everyone deserves belonging, support and opportunity;
- Inclusion is a fundamental expression of our mission and values.

Our schools welcome children of all faiths and none, and Resource Bases reflect this inclusive ethos.

Why Is There a Consultation?

Consultations ensure that:

- Parents and communities are informed;
- Views and concerns are listened to;
- Proposals are developed transparently and responsibly.

All feedback received during a consultation is carefully considered before decisions are made.

Final Reassurance

It is natural to have questions when new provision is proposed.

Experience across many schools shows that Resource Bases:

- Strengthen inclusion;
- Improve support for children with SEND;
- Enrich school communities.

Our aim is always the same: to provide the right support, at the right time, in the right place — while maintaining a happy, high-quality education for all pupils.