

## **Salisbury Free School Project Takes Next Step towards its aim of Opening in 2023 as Building Contractor Appointed**

### **++ Salisbury SEND Free School project hits key milestone after year of progress ++**

Reach South Academy Trust is celebrating hitting a new milestone in the bid to open a special needs free school in Salisbury. The Department for Education have appointed Tilbury Douglas as the project's preferred building contractor – a vital step to getting the school doors open and the building confirmed. The milestone comes following a year of progress for the proposed school as it comes closer to becoming a reality.

The SEND Free School project, designed for Wilton Road in Salisbury, will offer 150 places for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school will accommodate pupils with a diagnosis or primary need of autism (ASD) or social, emotional or mental health needs (SEMH). This will be a major contribution in ensuring that young people in south Wiltshire receive the specialised support they need.

The site is being developed by The Department for Education in close liaison with Reach South Academy Trust and Wiltshire Council, in preparation for the Trust to take up the reins at the end of the project. Tilbury Douglas have significant experience of building SEND schools and therefore fully understand the importance of getting the environment right for the children.

The SEND Free School project team have also recently appointed Dataspire Solutions Ltd as IT provider to ensure that the proposed school has the highest possible levels of innovative IT support. Using the most up-to-date technology is crucial to building student engaging and supporting them to learn at the highest level. Project engagement between both building and IT teams will therefore commence in earnest during the early part of 2022.

**Jon Hamp, Reach South Director of Individual Needs and Special Free School Project Lead, said:**

*"We were delighted to hear of the appointment of Tilbury Douglas as the approved building contractor and see this as a significant step taken in our bid to open the free school. Tilbury Douglas are really experienced in building schools for pupils with specific needs and I am very excited by the plans we have discussed so far. Our meetings to date have been highly detailed and have covered all aspects of both the internal and external environment. We're looking forward to the contractor submitting planning applications to make sure we get our school building exactly as we would want it."*

**Dean Ashton, Chief Executive of Reach South added,**

*"Special Educational Needs schools and resource bases are vital parts of the provision across our Trust. This school will prove hugely important for the young people of Salisbury and the surrounding area as we propose to address demand by significantly enhancing provision of specialised education for young people with a diagnosis or primary need of autism (ASD) or social, emotional or mental health needs (SEMH). We've made real progress with this project over the past year, there is still much to do before the school opens but everything is looking bright for our future plans."*

**Cllr Jane Davies, Cabinet Member for SEND at Wiltshire Council, said:**

*"I'm pleased we can share these important developments which are part of our wider long term plan to ensure we have sufficient places across Wiltshire for children and young people with SEND. We are*

*working closely with our partners on this important work for the south to ensure we can have the school opened and ready for learners with SEND. It is important we share these regular updates, so information and developments are known about at the earliest opportunity.”*

**Paul Gale, Divisional Director for Tilbury Douglas Southern region, said:**

*“Tilbury Douglas Construction Ltd are delighted and proud to be appointed the Selected Panel Member for the Salisbury Special Needs Free School Project. We are very much looking forward to transforming this site, bringing our significant experience in SEND Schools to this project and working with the Department of Education, Reach South Academy Trust and Wiltshire Council to deliver this much needed facility for young people in Salisbury.”*

**ENDS**