

Report to: Children and Young People's Panel / Cabinet

Date: 24th May 2007 / 31st May 2007

Subject: Review of Provision and Use of Resourced Schools

Report of: Director of Children and Young People's Services

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Purpose/summary: The purpose of this report is to:

- inform members of the current situation regarding resourced provision for primary-aged pupils requiring observation and assessment, and those with specific speech and language difficulties;
- highlight the need for specific provision for both primary and secondary-aged pupils, with low-severity autism, who have difficulty accessing mainstream provision, even with considerable support;
- outline proposals for change;
- seek Cabinet approval to conduct informal consultation on the proposals.

Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended: Contained within the report.

Recommendation/decision: Members are recommended to note the content of this report and:

- agree, in principle, the proposals outlined;
- approve the request to conduct informal consultation on the proposals, as necessary;
- approve the continuation of enabling work so that the anticipated implementation date of 1st September 2008 can be achieved.

Key Decision: This report involves a key decision within ground 1

The decision made as a result of this report will be published within **48 hours** and cannot be actioned until **five working days** have elapsed after that (**making a total of seven working days after the meeting**) i.e. before 12th June 2007.

This item is included in the Forward Plan.

Implications:

Financial: There are no financial or staffing implications directly as a result of this report.
 Staffing:
 Policy: School Organisation Plan. LA Inclusion Strategy.
 Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted? No
 Wards affected: All
 Special Interest Members – None
 Which have been consulted

Has the Director of Legal and Property Services confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? **Yes**
 Has the Director of Finance and IT confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? **Yes**
 Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No**

For Cabinet reports only :

Categorisation of the report:	x		x
Discussion leading to a decision	x	Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

Tracking/Process:

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
24/05/07		31/05/07	

There are no Background Papers to this Report within the meaning of Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Proper Officer



Date

14th May 2007

1 Background

- 1.1 In February 2003, the Local Authority began informal consultation on a wide ranging review of its specialist provision. Previous consultation had agreed principles of inclusive and equitable provision delivered within an area-based model.
- 1.2 Two areas of the 2003 consultation concerned the specialist resourced observation and assessment provision at Meadowbank Primary School, and the specialist resourced provision for pupils with speech and language difficulties at Hindley Green Primary School.
- 1.3 At that time, it was proposed that observation and assessment facilities be established in the three inclusion areas across borough – west, central and east, and that the provision of specialist resources for supporting pupils with speech and language difficulties be reviewed.
- 1.4 During 2005/2006 an external consultant ran two working parties to explore the role and function of the resourced provision at both Meadowbank and Hindley Green Primary Schools, and a range of options was considered. At that time, no further action was taken as the Local Authority was finalising the closure of six special schools and the establishment of three new special schools.

2 Current Situation

2.1 Observation and Assessment / Speech and Language Provision

- 2.1.1 Two new mainstream schools, both offering 18 observation and assessment places, have now been established in the centre and the west of the borough, at Platt Bridge Community School and Children's Centre and Westfield Community School and Children's Centre.
- 2.1.2 Draft admission criteria have been drawn up and agreed with the headteachers and governing body. The current places are offered on a three-term observation and assessment basis with the expectation that the pupil returns to their local school after this period of time. At present there are 4 pupils using the facility at Platt Bridge, and 8 at Westfield. Estimated numbers for the start of the 2007/2008 academic year are 7 and 2 respectively.
- 2.1.3 There is no similar facility in the east of the borough. Meadowbank Primary School continues to offer observation and assessment for up to 15 children in their nursery year only, and support for up to 32 pupils with complex speech and language difficulties continues to be provided on one site at Hindley Green Primary School. At present, there are 7 children using the facility at Meadowbank and 24 at Hindley Green Primary. Estimated numbers for the start of the 2007/2008 academic year are 4 and 19 respectively.

2.2 Other Provision

- 2.2.1 In September 2003, the Authority established Landgate School, Bryn, for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) who experience severe learning and communication difficulties and may also have challenging behaviour. Many other pupils with an ASD diagnosis have their needs appropriately met within mainstream schools (with extra support and/or outreach from Landgate) or in other specialist provision. However, a need has been identified for provision within the borough for

those pupils on the ASD continuum who do not have such severe learning needs but who are experiencing difficulty accessing a mainstream school, even with considerable support. Many of these children may be described as having Asperger's Syndrome.

- 2.2.2 In these cases, parents have expressed concern about the lack of specialist provision for their children and a number of them have exercised their right to challenge the Local Authority through the SEN Tribunal process. Three recent cases have resulted in the Local Authority being ordered to place pupils in independent provision at a total annual cost of at least £150,000.
- 2.2.3 Several pupils who are currently in provision for EBSD have underlying social-communication needs. If mainstream supported provision had been available in the past to meet these needs these would have enlisted an alternative to EBSD placement.
- 2.2.4 Asperger's is a more frequent diagnosis from medical professionals than in the past, and multi-agency work is occurring to address needs in this area.
- 2.2.5 There are corresponding parental pressure groups seeking high quality provision for their children.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Proposals from the 2003 consultation, along with the findings of the working party review, and updates from officers on current pupil needs, have led to the following proposals:
 - 3.1.1 That a mainstream primary school be identified, in the east of the borough, which will operate as a resourced school, on the same principles as the Westfield and Platt Bridge Primary Schools, ie by providing an 18-place observation and assessment facility for children aged 3-11 years. This will enable more children to access this type of provision nearer to their home.
 - 3.1.2 That the observation and assessment facility at the three area resourced schools be offered on a longer term basis than is currently available, ie for up to two years for those children with specific speech and language difficulties who would previously have attended the resourced provision at Hindley Green Primary School.
- 3.2 In order to meet the needs of those pupils as described in 2.2.1 above, it is also proposed:
 - 3.2.1 To use some of the 18 planned places within each of the 3 area resourced schools on a longer term basis to provide for primary-aged pupils with ASD who are not able to benefit from support within their local mainstream school. Following a period of observation and assessment, these places may be offered on a permanent basis for as long as it is considered appropriate.
 - 3.2.2 To establish a similar resource within the secondary sector.

4 Funding

- 4.1 Funding to support these proposals will be provided from within existing resources, by re-cycling the monies released from the possible disestablishment of the

resourced nursery provision at Meadowbank, and the disestablishment of the speech and language facility at Hindley Green Primary School.

- 4.2 The existing funding will be re-aligned within the ISB to deliver the new provision.
- 4.3 Any capital costs are expected to be minimal as pupils will be integrated into mainstream classes. Any minor works will be funded from the schools budget.

5 Conclusion

There is a clearly identified need within the Wigan borough to:

- 5.1 Establish an observation and assessment facility in the east of the borough, to replicate the facilities offered in the centre and the west, at Platt Bridge and Westfield Schools, to allow more children to access this facility closer to home.
- 5.2 Establish places within the three resourced primary schools for pupils with speech and language difficulties.
- 5.3 Establish provision for those pupils on the ASD continuum, in the primary sector, who are experiencing difficulty accessing a mainstream school, even with considerable support. This can be achieved by offering longer term placement for these pupils within the three area resourced schools, supplemented by external support from Landgate School. .
- 5.4 Establish similar provision to that described above, for pupils on the ASD continuum in the secondary sector. This can be achieved by identifying an appropriate school against set criteria.

6 Recommendations

In order to progress the proposals, approval of the following actions is recommended:

- 6.1 **Identify a Primary School in the East of the Borough to offer Resourced Provision for Pupils requiring Observation and Assessment, support for specific Speech and Language Difficulties, and Mainstream ASD Provision**
 - 6.1.1 The Local Authority wishes to provide inclusive and equitable educational provision across the borough. The new resourced school in the east will, therefore, need to offer similar resources to those at Platt Bridge and Westfield. The identified school, therefore, will have a nursery, and a Children's Centre would be desirable. Those schools in the east of the borough who meet the initial criteria will be asked to express an interest in becoming the resourced school.
 - 6.1.2 If Meadowbank were not to self-refer, or if they are unsuccessful in their bid, full consultation on the proposal to discontinue the resourced nursery facility at the school would be necessary, as this would entail a prescribed alteration to the school.
 - 6.1.3 Full consultation on the proposal to establish 18-place resourced provision at the nominated primary school will also be necessary.
- 6.2 **Discontinue the Speech and Language Development Centre at Hindley Green Primary School**

- 6.2.1 Full consultation on this proposal will be necessary as the closure of the specialist provision will entail a prescribed alteration to the school.
- 6.3 **Identify a Secondary School to offer Resourced Mainstream Provision for Pupils with ASD**
- 6.3.1 Secondary schools will be asked to express an interest in becoming the resourced school against set criteria.
- 6.3.2 Full consultation on this proposal will be necessary, as the proposal to extend provision at the nominated school will entail a prescribed alteration.