



## Children's Services - Education

### Update on SEN Review for Schools Forum

#### Background

A review of SEN Provision in Walsall over a 12 month period included consultation organised in 3 phases:

Phase 1: Stakeholder workshop consultation – January to April 2014

Phase 2: Wide ranging informal consultation – September to December 2014

Phase 3: Statutory consultation – February 23 to March 20 2015

Proposals for consultation related to the following SEN sectors:

1. Severe Learning Difficulties/ Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties
2. Social, Emotion and Mental Health
3. Moderate Learning Difficulties
4. Communication and Interaction (Autism)

Following the formal consultation, a report to cabinet in April 2015 recommended increasing the PAN in all 4 sectors.

The report also recommended one school for children with SEMH in order to ensure consistency of approach and ethos; facilitate effective transition and to ensure ongoing economic viability. Allowing for the recommended increase in places in the primary SEMH sector and the move to one school this would still result in a small school. The report noted that the interest of financial viability of this sector indicates the requirement to have one school with separate primary and secondary departments for children with SEMH in Walsall.

The proposed report was not accepted at cabinet. Information relating to the development of a unit for secondary age pupils with ASD at the Shepwell site was not received in time for the report. In addition cabinet expressed that the opposition of Phoenix School staff and parents to the proposal of one school for children with SEMH was insufficiently addressed through the consultation.

Tony Griffin Assistant Director and Mike Morris Group Manager met with Phoenix School SLT on 13.05.15. The SLT continue to raise strong objections to the concept of one SEMH school. The key issue of the financial viability of Phoenix was a focus of discussion. It was agreed that a detailed financial analysis would be completed to provide greater clarity.

A detailed financial analysis looking at costs across the special schools and also comparing with neighbouring local authorities was drawn up and has been shared with SLTs at Phoenix and Elmwood. The analysis identifies the following issues:

- The expectation would usually be that SLD schools would attract the highest funding rate, however due to their smaller capacity, particularly at Phoenix, it is the SEMH schools which attract the highest rate in Walsall
- Comparative data shows the SEMH funding rates in Walsall to be higher than neighbouring LAs.
- The analysis considered the funding elements as a percentage of the overall rate and demonstrated that although Phoenix attracts the highest level of per place funding, only 50% is allocated on the basis of pupil need, with 50% spent on fixed/management costs

- The report provided data confirming that the proportion of place funding needed to support fixed/management costs reduces in larger schools, with a higher proportion of overall funding supporting pupils
- The analysis demonstrated how resources can be used more effectively when supporting a single budget and even more so on single site.

The SLT for each SEMH school is considering this analysis prior to further consultation meetings to take place before the end of Summer term.

## **Inclusion Strategy**

Walsall's Inclusion Strategy was launched in April 2015.

Effective implementation of the inclusion strategy is critical to improving outcomes and the experience of children with SEND in Walsall. Local data has highlighted issues and emerging trends regarding inclusion in Walsall. These include:

- A growing gap in the educational achievement of children/young people with and without SEN
- Overall absence has been higher than the national average at primary and secondary for the last two years
- The number of children and young people known to be on 'reduced hours' (ie only attending school on a part-time basis) at secondary is significant (145 reported in 2013/14)
- Fixed term exclusions in special schools were more than double the national average in 2012/13
- Percentage of permanent exclusions in both primary and secondary have been higher than the national average since 2011/12
- Elective Home Education referrals from secondary schools increased over 2013-14 with the most significant increase (20-27) being in the category 'conflict with school'

The process for managed moves is under review due to concerns about its effectiveness.

Work to address all of these issues is underway.

## **Key Stage 1 MLD provision**

Whilst this was a topic of consultation the current numbers of children in this age range with identified MLD would not justify development of a new provision. Also, in line with the Inclusion Strategy, the educational needs of KS1 children should be met in mainstream schools as far as possible where this is able to meet needs.

## **Development of an ASD unit at Shepwell**

The Shepwell School has offered effective placements to a small number of secondary pupils with 'high functioning' ASD. There is a gap in this area of provision in Walsall with secondary age pupils requiring out of borough school placements to meet their learning needs. Development of a 20 place unit on the Shepwell site would address this, making use of the staffing expertise already in place.

A new building will be required on the Shepwell site. This has been costed at approximately £1.2 million. Schools Forum previously agreed £1 million for capital work related to the SEN Review.

Grant funding has been applied for to make up the shortfall and also for minor capital work at the SLD schools to facilitate placement of growing numbers in this sector of need. Current projected figures for pupils requiring SLD placements in September have been discussed with heads who report that these will be managed but adaptations are required for further growth.

## **Additionally Resourced Provision**

The SEN Review identified the need to increase the number of schools offering Additionally Resourced Provision for primary aged children with communication and interaction needs.

- Primary schools were asked at PNS and HT Briefing to express an interest if they wanted to be considered for an ARP
- Because of their location in an area where there are no current ARPs some schools were approached directly to see if they might be interested
- Interested schools were offered the opportunity to visit the ARP at Rushall school to find out more
- Seconded leaders then visited these schools (6 in total) to meet with SLT and governors for initial discussion and to consider possible location of the ARP
- Additional information to support the interest was requested by letter

## **Next Steps for ARP development**

- Short list based on information
- Conduct formal consultation with shortlisted schools and their parents
- Identify recommended schools for ARPs from the shortlist
- Report to Cabinet for decision

## **Next steps for the SEN review**

Recommendations to be presented to cabinet, date to be confirmed by 07.07.15

These will cover :

- 1) SEMH provision;
- 2) the Shepwell ASD development- outcome of grant funding application will inform the timeline for this;
- 3) Recommended schools for additional Additionally Resourced Provision – as outlined above