

11 October 2022

Specialist Provision Review

Wards(s): All

Portfolios: Councillor Mark Statham – Education and Skills

1. Aim

The aim of this report is to provide an overview of the current position of Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) specialist provision planning within the Local Authority.

2. Recommendations

That the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers the contents of this report and decides when there should be further information and updates.

3. Know: Context

Following on from the paper brought to the Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February 2022, this report provides an update on the ongoing work surrounding our specialist provision and pupil place planning for SEND.

The ongoing focus of the school organisation service is to review the requirement for SEND places across the borough in terms of pupil place planning and future proofing our place requirement. Working closely with the Inclusion Service, a five-year plan is being created to ensure our statutory responsibility for having sufficient school places is met.

3.1 Local Authority Support

The Local Authority has the support of two Head Teachers, Cathy Draper (Short Heath Federation) and Kate Bargh (North Star Federation) on a part time secondment basis to support the specialist provision review and development of school services within Walsall.

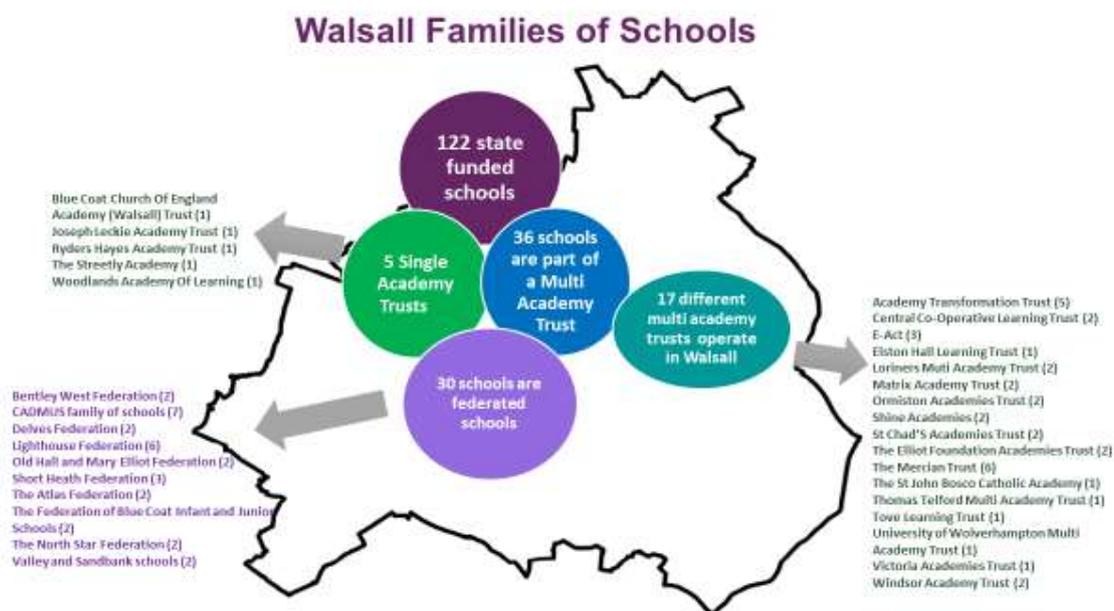
Working closely with officers, they have been overseeing and driving forward the education and inclusion agenda including the following 3 projects, working with our current LA teams, staff, and Walsall schools:

Specialist provision group/work- leading the development of the special provision plan to meet the gaps identified through the special provision group review of SEND places, working closely with our capital/school organisation team and SEND.

Specialist inclusion Service development – leading the development of our support services to support schools with behaviour, mental health support, and children at risk of poor/non-school attendance or exclusion

School Improvement - working with Local Authority representatives and schools' teams to support the school improvement agenda e.g., Schools Causing Concern conversations, commissioning Challenge Education and family of school's developments with schools.

The current Family of Schools in Walsall are



The work of the special provision review group aims to improve current processes and reorganise current provision to support better outcomes for children and young people (CYP) with SEND in Walsall. The work within this action plan aims to offer short, medium and long-term solutions. The expectation is that this work encompasses all sectors; education, health and social care and is co-produced with CYP and families working to the '*better together*' principle.

The action plan is divided into clear themes that all interweave and have equal importance to the overall vision of improving outcomes for CYP with SEND:



Each of these key strands of work can be grouped into two themes - the protocols to support inclusive practice and the review of specialist settings.

Inclusive Practice:

The equity of inclusive practice across the Borough is the highest priority. This is essential for the whole the education sector from EYFS to Post 16 to ensure we are preparing our CYP adequately for adulthood. Much of this work will involve reinforcing the SEND Code of Practice (CoP) and establishing clear protocols, support, and pathways for all partners, including health and social care to support mainstream settings with the full inclusion of CYP with SEND. Working collaboratively with partners will allow greater opportunities to work in a more coordinated and efficient way.

Review of Specialist Settings:

Whilst our inclusive vision and legal presumption that all children including those with SEND have a right to mainstream education, we must ensure that children with significant and complex SEND have the opportunity to attend a specialist setting in a timely way. A review of current specialist places (special schools and resourced provisions) will focus on the immediate and future needs. An accurate picture of the data will enable provision to support the needs of CYP in the short, medium and long term. This will also include a full review of out of borough places that are used for SEND placements.

The current update with each of the key strands of work is as follows:

High Needs Funding:

- Plans to review the revised banding process within the next 12 months including moderation and review processes
- Explore funding options in Early Years and Post 16
- Explore joint commission with partners including Health where appropriate.

Specialist Inclusion Support Service (SISS):

- Review existing provision and commissioned services utilised by education settings.
- Explore options of a commissioned and traded services model or as a de-delegated service to supplement developments in specialist inclusion support services, through our specialist provisions. A de delegation request will be tabled at Schools Forum in October 2022.
- Evaluate current Hearing Impaired/ Visually Impaired (HI/VI) provision and assess whether multi-sensory provision could be developed as part of a wider outreach support offer.

Primary to Secondary Transition (Team around the Child)

- Established a primary to secondary transition 'Team Around the Child' (TAC) model as a pilot to support children with SEND in their transition from Year 6 to Year 7.
- Multi agency team led by Early Help focussed on 15 pupils from 10 primary schools transitioning to 2 secondary schools for September 2022. Education, Health and Social Care involved in project with positive transition arrangements for pupils, families and schools.
- Planning for wider TAC programme for September 2023 transitions

3.2 Pupil Place Requirement

An analysis of EHCPs over the last 3 years has indicated the need for additional specialist places above the existing commissioned places in our special schools and additional resource units in mainstream schools over the next five years.

Whilst the detailed long-term plan for places is being reviewed there was an immediate requirement from September 2022 for high-need Cognition and Learning and Autism places in primary and secondary schools. Further places for Social, Emotional & Mental Health (SEMH) places within secondary are also required. The specialist provision group has worked with head teachers and governing bodies, from both mainstream and special schools to find an appropriate solution for this immediate need; in the form of additional resourced hubs in mainstream schools, and increased commissioned numbers within current special schools. This has led to the creation of over 100 additional places to meet need.

Whilst the current need for 2022 is known and has been provided, analysis of the forecasted demand including requests for statutory assessments, types and level of need is ongoing to ensure sufficiency of provision for the longer term. This more detailed review will allow Walsall the opportunity to provide the

places required and ensure appropriate provision for all children moving forward in the most appropriate type of setting. A continual review of forecasted demands and places needed, as part of an annual sufficiency statement will ensure the needs for Walsall's pupils is kept under review.

3.3 Longer term needs

Interim solutions are being reviewed across the borough in all education settings to provide additional places to meet the current needs of the CYP in Walsall.

For the majority of CYP, a mainstream education would be the most appropriate provision, however where needs are more complex and significant, a specialist setting may be an option. Consideration of additional ways to support CYP with an EHCP to remain in mainstream provision is one of the key themes in the action plan.

Once numbers have been confirmed as part of the detailed analysis in terms of need and designation, there are areas where the additional place requirement could be created for Walsall pupils:

1) Expansions of existing provisions within the borough.

The School Organisation team has requested Integrated Facilities Management to commission work from an external architect company to undertake desktop feasibility studies. A baseline of existing capacity in each school has been established and options on how each school could be remodelled and expanded are being worked up that take account of existing site constraints e.g., ground problems/mineshafts, highway implications etc.

In addition, working with our corporate landlord team, existing corporate assets that are underutilised are being reviewed for consideration as satellite school expansion projects.

2) Review of capacity within mainstream settings that could accommodate and support additional SEND provision.

The School Organisation Team are currently reviewing all Net Capacity Assessments and floor plans for mainstream schools across the borough to establish a baseline of teaching spaces and any surplus areas in the schools. These assessments will be used to have informed conversations with schools about the opportunity and suitability for a SEND hub to be created within the school. This would be utilising existing space within a school where appropriate, for children with SEND requirements to attend the provision at a mainstream whilst being on the school roll of their appropriate SEND school provision.

3) Creation of a Free School.

Officers have pre-registered with the Department for Education (DfE) the Local Authority's intention to make an application for a new SEN Free School in the current application round which closes on Friday 21 October: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/special-free-school-applications/how-to-apply-to-set-up-a-special-free-school-for-local-authorities>

The application is likely to be heavily oversubscribed as a number of LAs have increasing demands for specialist provision places over the coming years.

The DfE have indicated that successful local authorities will be announced late 2022 to early 2023, following which competitions will then launch in the successful areas through the publication of local authority specifications and proposer guidance to find an operator to run the new free school.

The DfE current timeline indicates successful proposer applications will be announced and the project will enter the pre-opening stage in September 2023, following which a design, procurement and construction/remodelling period will follow before the new school can open.

3.4 Next Steps

Officers will continue to review the detailed analysis of forecasted demand for specialist places over the next five years together with options for delivery – through expansions and remodelling of existing provisions or other LA assets over the next few months with an aim to bring a further report on proposals to members of this committee.

4. Financial

The additional places and needs will form part of the SEND capital plan and utilisation of DfE grant funding for additional school places. This will be reported through the financial reports to scrutiny.

Commissioned places are funded from the High Needs Block of schools funding and growth funding has been built into the future modelling of this funding.

5. Decide

Scrutiny may decide to note the current position.

The committee may decide to ask that a further briefing on place planning be offered to members.

6. Respond

The committee may decide to request further information as pertains to individual planning area and school expansions.

7. **Review**

Continued development into the review of SEND place requirement across the borough to future proof SEND provision for Walsall will continue through the special provision group

Capital needs will be taken to Children's Capital board

Background Papers:

SEND Strategy Paper – Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee – February 2022

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