

Cabinet – 25 October 2017**Special School Place Planning**

Portfolio: Councillor Nawaz – Children’s Services and Education

Service: Children’s Services

Wards: All

Key decision: Yes

Forward plan: Yes

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council has a duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for resident children who want a school place. A local authority has a general duty, under section 14 of the Education Act 1996, to secure that there are available in its area sufficient schools “in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education”.
- 1.2 At their meeting on 26 April 2017, Cabinet requested a report into the options available to the Council to increase the number of places in Walsall’s special schools, to meet the increase in demand for places over the next five years and to ensure that the authority can meet its statutory requirements. Cabinet also approved proposals to provide additional special school places in the short term, to be available from September 2017.
- 1.3 An update on the work carried out to provide additional special school places from September 2017 is given in this report.
- 1.3 Feasibility studies have been carried out at six special schools. Consultation has taken place with the headteachers and governing bodies on proposals to increase the number of places at Jane Lane School, Castle Business and Enterprise College, Shepwell School, Old Hall School (all from September 2018); and at Oakwood School and Mary Elliot School (both from September 2019). Delivery of these schemes is subject to a formal consultation on each of the proposals to significantly enlarge the schools and, in some cases, alter their designation. The consultation will start on Thursday 2 November 2017 and will close on Thursday 30 November 2017. The outcome will be reported to Cabinet at its meeting on 13 December 2017.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet approve the proposals to provide additional special school places at the school sites set out in this report to meet the increase in demand for special school places, to be achieved by September 2018 and September 2019.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approve a process of statutory consultation on the proposals to significantly enlarge Old Hall School, Shepwell School, Castle Business and Enterprise College, Jane Lane School, (all from September 2018); and at Oakwood School and Mary Elliot School (both from September 2019).

3. Report detail

3.1 Background

The proposal to enlarge six of Walsall's special schools forms part of the Council's 5 year pupil place planning strategy (Cabinet 8 February 2017). A report elsewhere in this agenda reports back to Cabinet on the outcome of the consultation to expand 6 primary schools from September 2018.

In April, Cabinet noted the potential increase in the number of specialist school places in Walsall that may be required and asked for a further report to consider the options available to ensure the authority can meet its statutory requirement to ensure sufficient school places are available within Walsall. Further, Cabinet approved the proposal to provide additional special school places to meet the increase in demand from September 2017.

3.2 Special Schools Places from September 2017

Approval was given to carry out alterations at a number of schools, potentially creating up to 50 additional places:

- Old Hall school – creating 16 additional teaching spaces for high needs children of primary age by converting meeting rooms/storage as a short term measure – 8 additional places were achieved;
- Oakwood school – creating 6 additional teaching spaces for high needs children of primary age by providing temporary accommodation in the grounds of the school for meeting room/administration- 6 additional places were achieved;
- Other appropriate site(s) as identified to meet Key Stage 1 need in particular, creating up to 28 additional places, including assessment places- this project is underway and is likely to create 22 places to be available from January 2018.

3.3 Special Schools

There are over 51,000 pupils on roll in Walsall schools. Over 7,800 (15.2%) have some form of special educational need. The largest group (38.4%) are those with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD). Most pupils with MLD attend mainstream schools.

Just over 620 pupils are on roll in Walsall's special schools. That is 1.23% of the total number on roll. Those special schools that have or have had the designation of 'MLD' increasingly admit pupils with more complex special educational needs. The needs of most children with special educational needs are met in mainstream schools. There is also specialist provision for children with special educational needs within mainstream schools. There are 110 places in ARPs (additional resourced provision) in Walsall's mainstream schools. These meet a range of special educational needs and, in each case, support inclusion, as up to 80% of a young person's time may be spent in mainstream education.

Walsall compares favourably with other similar local authority areas. Of the eleven comparable local authorities, Walsall has the third lowest Special School population (see chart in **Appendix 1**).

The proposal in the April report was for an increase of 156 special school places at existing schools over the next 5 years. That includes the additional places that were proposed from September 2017. Further justification for those proposals and supporting information is included in **Appendix 1**.

Why these schools?

The Children and Families Act 2014 says that children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) should be educated in mainstream schools and other mainstream provision unless their SEN require more specialist provision. The report to Cabinet in April showed the increase in demand for special school places in Walsall:

- The school age population in Walsall is growing by just under 1% a year (around 400 young people a year) and is projected to increase over the next 10 years. A *pro rata* increase in the numbers of children with special educational needs would imply the need for additional 100 or so special school places;
- There has been an increase in the numbers of children identified with some form of SEND, particularly growth of more complex needs, including ASC (Autism Spectrum);
- The number of children going to placements that are outside the borough, where placement costs are often higher, particularly when transport costs are added.

Virtually all Walsall's existing special schools are technically 'full' (in some cases, over capacity), the basic justification for the proposed increase in places. A surplus of between 5-10% of school places is also usually considered to be 'prudent'. Sufficiency and capacity studies were carried out at three of the special schools with visits and surveys of the other three schools before the feasibility studies were commissioned.

School places for children with SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health) special needs

We need to increase the number of places for young people with SEMH in Walsall, although no specific proposals are brought forward in this report. We are working with the two 'SEMH' schools in Walsall to look at the scope for developing provision in the borough. We are also reviewing provision for children and young people who are or have been permanently excluded from school (and not necessarily with some form of special educational need).

Children with special educational needs and who have SEMH are over-represented in out of borough placements. As reported in the April Cabinet report, we were unsuccessful in our bid to the Department for Education and the Regional Schools Commissioner to support the establishment of a local authority commissioned free special school that was aimed at providing places for young people with SEMH and Learning Difficulties.

3.4 Overall approach to the feasibility studies

Following the April Cabinet report, architectural feasibility studies at each of the six special schools were commissioned and were carried out over the summer. These looked at the scope to increase the physical capacity of each school. The feasibility studies are architect only investigations to RIBA Stage 1. The next Stage is a multi-disciplinary Stage 2 Concept design that develops the preferred option.

With each of the feasibility studies, the architects looked at the school as a whole and how it worked. With special school expansions, there is an impact of increased numbers of pupils and staff at the schools on shared facilities in the school (dining, staff accommodation) and on the school site (access, parking etc.). With a number of the schools, it is likely that the expansions will only be done once and a degree of future proofing is possible at some schools in case numbers increase further.

The proposed building solutions mainly involve new build and extensions, much more so than internal adaptations (which are not always possible with some schools anyway). The preferred options are preferred by the schools themselves and have been reviewed by the Head of School Improvement's team. Also, initial consultation suggests that the preferred options are, in most cases, likely to be seen as more acceptable in Planning terms.

In terms of value for money, special schools are more expensive to build or extend than mainstream schools; they tend to be classrooms for 8-10 pupils each, only compared with 30 in mainstream, so the unit costs are higher. There is a national benchmark figure of £64,000 per additional special school place. Before contingencies are added, all the proposed schemes cost less per pupil than the average.

3.5 Special school expansion proposals

Proposed expansion	Number of additional places created
Old Hall Special school –September 2018	16
Shepwell school-. September 2018	15
Castle Business and Enterprise College-. September 2018	30
Jane Lane school – September 2018	30
Oakwood school-. September 2019	15
Mary Elliot school-. September 2019	20
	126

The financial implications of each of these proposals are shown below in section 6. The precise number of places created may vary depending on the final version of each scheme that is agreed.

3.6 Old Hall Special school

Old Hall is a special school in Short Heath ward. It caters for children of nursery and primary school age with complex special educational needs. The school is a local authority maintained school and is currently rated Good by Ofsted. In terms of physical capacity, it currently has 60 places though 80 places have been commissioned/funded from April 2017. There were 4 nursery age children and 75 primary age children on roll in May. There were some internal adaptations to the school over the summer that created 8 additional teaching spaces.

The proposal in the feasibility study is to create 16 additional places at the school. The preferred option (D) involves the demolition of the caretaker's house, building a new larger scale (than in other options) new build classroom block with 3 classrooms and support facilities (medical, therapy) and extra car/bus parking in its place. This option also addresses operational issues on the site including the parking, an enlarged school entrance and a covered pupil drop-off canopy as well as an enlarged classroom in the main body of the school. Other options involved largely 'bolt on' and smaller class room extensions. The initial idea was to relocate the staffroom and some administrative functions to the caretaker's house at the edge of the site (which would be vacated) and convert into classrooms (Option A). That would mean staff would be out of the main school building during break times and, as such, was not attractive to staff and governors. Option A is 40% cheaper than any of the other options, but it fails to address any of the operational issues that the school would face when numbers increase.

3.7 Shepwell School

Shepwell school is a short stay school (medical needs) principally for pupils of secondary school age with provision for children on the Autistic spectrum (ASC). It provides home and hospital provision plus SEN outreach to other schools in the borough. It is in Willenhall South ward. It is a local authority maintained school and is currently rated as Good by Ofsted. There are currently 30 short stay places and 15 places in the provision for students with ASC.

The preferred option from the feasibility study is to create 15 additional places principally for ASC young people by creating an extension to the existing building. The existing building requires remodelling to improve the existing teaching spaces and this option provides a new main entrance. Additional parking and play spaces are also proposed. Two options are presented: the second option is for the same scheme less the new main entrance, with a cost difference of 4%.

3.8 Castle Business & Enterprise College

Castle Business and Enterprise College is a school for pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulties (MLD) and additional special educational needs. It provides places for children and young people aged 7-19. In May 2017, there were 29 primary age pupils, 79 secondary age pupils and 20 post 16 students at Castle. It is in Bloxwich West ward. It is a local authority maintained school and is currently rated as Outstanding by Ofsted. It has a current capacity of 100 with around 120 commissioned places.

The preferred option from the feasibility study is to create 30 additional places through classroom extensions and/or new classroom blocks. Each option is for an extension at different areas around the school and all are of a very similar cost (10% between the highest and lowest cost). The school's preferred option is one that sees most of the new accommodation being built on the south side of the site.

3.9 The Jane Lane School

The Jane Lane school is a school for pupils with Cognition and Learning Difficulties. It provides places for children and young people aged 7-19. In May 2017, there were 26 primary age pupils, 66 secondary age pupils and 37 post 16 students at Jane Lane. It is in Bentley & Darlaston North ward. It is a local authority maintained school and is currently rated as Good by Ofsted. It has a current capacity of 120 with around 130 commissioned places.

There are two main options brought toward. Both are for a new three classroom block with a choice of locations and also for a single class extension in addition at the north west of the main building. There are sub options that include covered walkways across the school site. The cost difference between the two main options is 2%.

3.10 Oakwood School

Oakwood school is a school for nursery and primary age pupils with Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD), Profound & Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) plus Medical Needs. In May 2017, there were 7 nursery age and 67 primary age pupils on roll. It is in Aldridge North & Walsall Wood ward. It is a local authority maintained school and is currently rated as Outstanding by Ofsted. It has a current capacity of 66 places with 75 commissioned places this year. 6 new places have been created in the school this year by creating a meeting room in a 'shepherd's hut' in the school yard.

Three main options are brought forward to achieve a further 26 places, one of which is for a new 3 classroom block attached to the main school with dining areas infilled and using some of the very limited hard play area at the school. The other two options both involve extending the site of the school to take a small proportion of the Council owned public open space to the south of the school. The existing school site is very constrained; it can only be adequately extended if further land is acquired. The cost difference between the two site expansion options is around 10%.

3.11 Mary Elliot School

Mary Elliot school is a school for secondary age pupils with complex special educational needs and learning difficulties. In May 2017, there were 86 Year 7 – Year 11 pupils on roll and 40 post 16 students. (Many children from both Old Hall and Oakwood schools transfer to Mary Elliot). It is in Birchills Leamore ward. It is a local authority maintained school and is currently rated as Good by Ofsted. It has a current capacity of 110 places with 127 commissioned places this year. The feasibility study includes options that provide up to 30 additional places.

There are three options- A1: an extension to the main entrance and dining hall; A2: extension to the north west corner and dining hall; and Option B: an extension to the south east corner and the dining hall. A combination of improved site layout and remodelling/extension of the school building are possible. This could achieve up to 30 additional places (10 more than initially required). Option B is preferred by the school, giving 4 large classrooms and support facilities, but also increased parking provision as well as an extension to the existing dining hall. It has the least impact on both the existing building and the external pupil areas and is slightly cheaper than option A.

3.12 Quality of Provision

The proposals in this report include some to expand provision at a number of maintained special schools in Walsall. All special schools in Walsall are rated either as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. Statutory guidance is clear that "it is expected that, where possible, additional new places will only be provided at schools that have an overall Ofsted rating of 'good' or 'outstanding'." The proposals will create

additional quality places to meet changing needs that parents and young people will find attractive and which will create conditions that will help to improve the educational outcomes for those young people. The Council's Head of School Improvement and her team have been consulted on each of the special school expansion proposals.

4. Council Priorities

4.1 The Council's purpose is to 'Reduce inequalities and maximise potential'. Its four priorities are:

- Pursue inclusive economic growth
- Make a positive difference to the lives of Walsall people
- Children are safe from harm, happy and learning well with self-belief, aspiration and support to be their best
- Safe, resilient and prospering communities.

4.2 The proposals in this report contribute most directly to the Council priority of ensuring that 'Children are safe from harm, are happy and learning well, with self-belief, aspiration and support to be their best' and indirectly to the other three priorities.

5. Risk Management

5.1 There is a need to ensure there are sufficient specialist school places to meet local demand. A shortage means that children may not be able to access a place at their nearest appropriate school, with placements being made in out of borough schools, including independent non maintained schools.

6. Financial Implications

6.1 Existing Specialist School Alterations/Expansions: Cabinet on the 26th April 2017 approved the recommended expansion for capital works necessary to secure the additional special school Key Stage 1 provision required from September 2017. The required alterations identified are estimated to cost £0.834m (as detailed in the below table) of which £0.554m is profiled to be spent in 2017/18 and £0.280m in 2018/19.

Regarding funding, Schools Forum previously agreed, at their meeting on 9 December 2014, to allocate £1m of DSG revenue balances to be utilised to create additional SEN places, and a request to dis-apply the regulations (and utilise revenue funding for capital costs) was then made to the Secretary of State who formally approved the use of up to £1m of DSG revenue balances to be utilised for capital purposes. The total costs remain within this funding envelope without a need to utilise any further Basic Need funding, and once completed, any remaining balance can contribute towards any further specialist school capital works identified.

6.2 New Proposed Specialist School Alterations/Expansions: As detailed within the report, the proposed expansions could involve extensions, alterations, remodelling or new buildings at the school sites and initial estimated costs outlined in the table below are for capital works (and related fees).

Proposed expansion	Number of additional places created/funded	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	20% Contingency	Total Cost
		£	£	£	£	£	£
Old Hall Special school – option D. September 2018	16	253,200	904,050	0	0	231,450	1,388,700
Shepwell school-option B. September 2018	15	33,800	906,142	291,903	0	246,369	1,478,214
Castle Business and Enterprise College-option B. September 2018	30	19,211	1,095,405	347,437	0	292,411	1,754,463
Jane Lane school – option A01/03. September 2018	30	17,939	829,853	374,886	112,227	266,981	1,601,887
Oakwood school-option B. September 2019	15	15,342	569,864	190,238	147,332	184,555	1,107,331
Mary Elliot school-option 1A. September 2019	20	31,168	1,216,430	333,286	192,951	354,767	2,128,601
	126	370,659	5,521,745	1,537,750	452,510	1,576,533	9,459,197

The total estimated build cost for the new proposed expansions, is a total cost of £9.459m (as detailed in the table above), all to be funded from the Basic Need Capital fund. This capital grant is allocated by the Department for Education to local authorities, based on pupil place number forecasts, to deliver the additional places in schools to meet expected demand. In terms of net capital funding available, including 2018/19 confirmed DfE allocation of £21.6m, there is circa £18.782m of Basic Need funding currently available and uncommitted on the assumption the schemes recommended in the primary expansion report are approved. For reference - *Proposed expansion of Leighswood School, Manor Primary School, Old Church CE Primary School, Salisbury Primary School, Short Heath Foundation and St Michael's CE Primary School from 1 September 2019.*

- 6.3 As part of the feasibility works being undertaken, a profile of the estimate build costs over 2017/18 and future years has been undertaken to ensure each stage of the build can be appropriately funded. As per the above table, costs of £0.371m are expected to be incurred during 2017/18, which remains affordable within the current funding profile. The majority of costs are profiled to be incurred during 2018/19, where the current allocation of £21.616m has been confirmed via the DfE.
- 6.4 Historically there have been significant risks associated with increased costs for existing school enlargement. It is therefore prudent to ensure the full Basic need allocation available is not fully committed in order to ensure an appropriate level of contingency remains. The contingency level is currently set at 20% using the estimated costs as a basis and will be monitored as each scheme progresses. There is therefore £1.577m set aside as a contingency for these proposed expansions. If the estimated costs do not increase further, a level of Basic Need Funding would remain uncommitted at the end of each project. This funding is ring fenced to school enlargement projects and would therefore be carried forward into

future years until such time as additional places in schools are required (including Special School places and Pupil Referral Unit places).

- 6.5 Each of the six specialist schools will be asked to contribute 100% of their 2018/19 Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) allocations towards the overall costs of the schemes. This funding is allocated by the Department for Education to Local Authorities and is passported directly to schools on an annual basis to contribute towards school capital schemes.
- 6.6 The revenue costs of providing / supporting all special school places and high needs provision that are available and required are funded through the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding that the authority receives.
- 6.7 For 2017/18 the places that have been commissioned by the local authority, including those additional places that were planned to be available from September 2017 that were set out in the April cabinet report, are affordable within the totality of High Needs Block DSG funding and balances that are available to the authority.
- 6.8 When additional high needs places are created, this does not necessarily result in an increase in DSG High Needs Block funding that is paid to the local authority by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) – any increase would be dependent on the total amount of high needs funding available nationally.
- 6.9 As such the authority needs to ensure that the additional places in special schools that it is seeking to create, once occupied, are likely to be affordable within the DSG High Needs block funding that it is expecting to receive.
- 6.10 The average annual cost of a special school place in Walsall is circa £22k per year. The forecast from the Council's Special Educational Needs team is that 50% of the places that are created will be filled when they become available (either September 2018 or September 2019 dependent on the school), with the remaining 50% then filled in the following September (September 2019 or September 2020 dependent on school).
- 6.11 This would indicate that revenue costs for these places that will need to be met from the DSG High needs Block are likely to increase by £1.012m in 2018/19, a further £1.386m in 2019/20 and a further £374k in 2020/21 – a total increase of £2.772m across the period which would be ongoing into 2021/22 onwards.
- 6.12 Over the same period the indicative allocations that the authority is expecting to receive for its DSG High Needs Block funding for 2018/19 are expected to increase by £747k in 2018/19, and then increase by a further £843k in 2019/20, increase by a further £941k in 2020/21 and a further £969k in 2021/22 – a total increase of £3.500m across the period.
- 6.13 It should also be noted that there is an underspend on the current high needs block funding of circa £500k per year which is also expected to be ongoing across this period.
- 6.14 This shows that the potential funding that will be available is likely to be sufficient to fully pay for the expected increase in costs in every year until 2021/22, with the exception of 2019/20 where a one off contribution of £308k from DSG High Needs Block Reserves will be required to be used (this is within the level of DSG High Needs Block reserves which are available) – this is summarised in the table below:

	2018/19 (£m)	2019/20 (£m)	2020/21 (£m)	2021/22 (£m)	Total Use of Reserves (£m)
Cumulative Indicative Change in High Needs Block Funding	0.747	1.590	2.531	3.500	
Estimated Ongoing Underspend on Current High needs Block Funding	0.500	0.500	0.500	0.500	
Total Change in Funding	1.247	2.090	3.031	4.000	
Estimated Increase in Costs	1.012	2.398	2.772	2.772	
Amount to be funded from DSG High Needs Block Reserves	0.000	0.308	0.000	0.000	0.308

- 6.15 It should be noted that the indicative DSG High Needs Block funding allocations for future years are based on the notional information released by DfE regarding the move to a national high needs funding formula and will be subject to change over this period. As such there is a risk, that if any actual funding increase is not in line with the indicative increases set out, that the authority may need to review the overall use of the DSG High Needs Block funding to identify options available to it to ensure that costs overall are in line with funding available.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 The Children and Families Act 2014 and The Special Education and Disability Regulations 2014 requires local authorities to keep the provision for children and young people with SEN and disabilities under review (including its sufficiency), working with parents, young people and providers (SEND Code of Practice, January 2015 Chapter 4).
- 7.2 A local authority has a general duty, under section 14 of the Education Act 1996, to secure that there are available in its area sufficient schools “in number, character and equipment to provide for all pupils the opportunity of appropriate education.”

8. Procurement Implications/Social Value

- 8.1 The existing framework arrangements that the Council has in place will be used for school alterations and expansions over the next 5 years.

9. Property Implications

- 9.1 The proposals would involve expansions and/or alterations at the schools identified and described in this report.

10. Health and Wellbeing Implications

- 10.1 The most relevant Marmot principle in relation to the proposed expansion of the special schools is that of enabling all children and young people to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives.

11. Staffing Implications

- 11.1 Additional teaching and support staff will be recruited to provide for the additional children to be admitted to the school.

12. Equality Implications

- 12.1 Ensure access to suitable, high quality specialist school places that is attractive to parents and young people and which meets their needs and improve educational outcomes. An EqlA (Equalities Impact Assessment) has been updated since the report to Cabinet on specialist school places in April. Where possible, analysis of children/families affected by or potentially benefiting from the specialist educational provision should be carried out by 'protected characteristics' including, for example, ethnicity or different forms of disability.

13. Consultation

Where the local authority is the proposer of a change for a community special school and it wishes to increase by 10% or 20 pupils, or decrease numbers, it must follow a statutory process for making 'prescribed alterations' that includes a public consultation lasting 4 weeks.

Headteachers and governing bodies have been consulted on the feasibility schemes and are supportive. The proposed expansions give schools the opportunity to consider the appropriateness of their current designations too. The Head of School Improvement and her team have been consulted on these proposals and are supportive of them too.

Proposals to increase the size, age range or designation of schools, including special schools, are to be subject to a process of statutory consultation. For local authority maintained schools, the requirements are set out in the School Organisation Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools, England, Regulations 2013. A consultation will follow on the specific school proposals as these are required.

Background papers

Cabinet 4 February 2015, Agenda Item 10:	Special Educational Needs and Disability Review.
Cabinet 8 February 2017, Agenda Item 16:	Proposed Implementation of the Five-Year Sufficiency Strategy plan.
Cabinet 26 April 2017, Agenda Item 12:	Specialist School Place Planning.

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Signed
Executive Director
Date: 26 September 2017



Signed
Portfolio Holder
Date: 17 October 2017

Appendix 1

Special school places

1. Demand

In the report to Cabinet in April the following information was presented on the demand for places.

“Projections of Demand

We know that:

- The total school age population of Walsall will continue to increase over the next 10 years – it is increasing by just under 1% a year, adding around 400 young people a year to the school age population;
- There is a *pro rata* increase in the number of young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Around 15% of children have some form of special educational need. In Walsall, 3.5% have significant special educational needs and have either a statement or an Education Health and Care plan. Whilst the vast majority of children with SEN are in mainstream schools, the general increase in the school age population alone is enough to justify over 100 additional specialist places
- There has been an increase in the numbers of young people identified as having some form of SEND and the marked growth in particular types of SEND, such as ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder)- an increase of 15% over a 5 year period- and other more complex special needs;
- No local authority is or ever will be self sufficient in its SEN provision. However, typically, there are over 200 children and young people a year going out of borough to school placements in other authority areas. Many are the nearest appropriate placement in neighbouring areas; others are in regionally based specialist provision, while around 70 or so a year are in independent specialist provision. Placement costs are typically higher than those in-borough, even more so when transport costs are added.
- There is a decline nationally in the proportion of pupils with a statement or Education Health and Care plan who are in mainstream school settings;
- Also nationally, the Department for Education, forecast a significant (30%+) increase in the number of special school places that will be required in England up to 2024;
- There is local information about the numbers of very young children being identified as having some form of special educational need or disability. In the autumn term, just under 50 children were identified as possibly requiring a Key Stage 1 special school place in Walsall in 2017-2018,
- There are therefore short term pressures that need to be addressed for September 2017 –a demand for places for Key Stage 1 children with more complex special educational needs. It is proposed to achieve this by selective use of adaptations and/or placing at other appropriate school sites.”

The proposals that went to Cabinet in February 2015 were to increase the number of specialist places by **125**.

2. Inclusion

In the same Cabinet report in April, a reference was made to Walsall's SEND Strategy. The report said:

"The Children and Families Act 2014 is clear that children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) should be educated in mainstream schools and other mainstream provision unless their SEN require more specialist provision. The authority is working with all schools to promote and develop inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream settings and to improve the outcomes for those young people. As part of our strategic planning work for SEN, we are developing measures to support mainstream schools in meeting the special educational needs of a wider range of pupils, through workforce training and thorough developing and promoting the specialist expertise that exists within Walsall. An example of this work is in supporting school SENCOs (special educational needs coordinators) in the identification of particular types of special educational need and the appropriate response."

That support work is developing this term through SENCo forums and workshops and SEN reviews in schools themselves.

Cabinet approved the increases for September 2017, noted the potential increase over the next 5 years and asked for the feasibility studies to be carried out.

The following Table shows that Walsall has a smaller percentage of pupils in its Special Schools than seven out of nine of its comparators.

LA Code		Total state-funded	State funded special	% of pupils in a special schools
335	Walsall	50,830	623	1.23%
350	Bolton	49,790	720	1.45%
354	Rochdale	35,245	515	1.46%
357	Tameside	36,189	398	1.10%
371	Doncaster	47,558	535	1.12%
372	Rotherham	44,698	624	1.40%
831	Derby	42,631	596	1.40%
332	Dudley	47,308	786	1.66%
861	Stoke-on-Trent	38,818	686	1.77%
894	Telford and Wrekin	28,741	537	1.87%
874	Peterborough	36,271	626	1.73%

* Data taken from SFR Table 7b January 2017

3. Profile

The SEND strategy was supported by an analysis of demand and provision. The Summary to that report said:

The needs of most children with special educational needs are met in mainstream schools. In January 2016, there were 51,758 pupils on roll in Walsall schools. Of these, 7,849 pupils or 15.2% had some form of special educational need. Within that total, 1,376 had a statement of special educational need while 422 had an Education Health and Care plan. So, 1,798 pupils or 3.5% of the total pupils on roll had a statement or EHC plan.

Of the 7,849 pupils with some form of SEN, by far the largest category was MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulty) representing 38.4% of SEN pupils, followed by SLCN (Speech, Language and Communication Needs) at 18.2%; then SEMH (Social, Emotional and Mental Health needs) at 12.3%. Like many other local authorities, Walsall has seen an increase in the number of diagnoses of ASD (Autistic Spectrum Disorder) in recent years. There are now over 600 children with ASD in Walsall schools, 7.7% of the total number of pupils with SEN in schools.

4. Types of special educational needs and comparisons

Key points:

- The numbers of pupils with Moderate Learning Difficulty in Walsall represent 25.2% of the number of pupils with statements/Education Health and Care plans. That is twice the national average rate for England. For those with SEN support in schools (almost all in mainstream), nearly half (45.8%) the pupils are or have MLD. That too is, significantly above the national average of 26.8% of pupils;
- The second highest group with statements are those with SLD (Severe Learning Difficulties) , 200 pupils or 16.8% of the total which is about 4 percentage points above the national average;
- The third largest group with statements are those with ASD, 14.6% of the Walsall total, though this is a good 10 percentage points less than the average for England;
- The fourth highest group with statements are those pupils with SEMH (Social Emotional and Mental Health)– 130 with statements or 10.9% of the total compared with the average for England of 12.3%. Over 600 young people with SEMH are on SEN support, 11.7% of the Walsall SEN support total;

- 128 or 10.8% of pupils with statements have SLCN (Speech Language and Communication Needs) in Walsall; that is 3 percentage points below the national average. There are 937 pupils with SLCN who have SEN support, 18.0% of the SEN support total in Walsall, which is just below the average for England.

The two large special schools either have or have had 'MLD' as at least part of their designation. Those designations will change as part of the school expansion programme. They are actually meeting a much wider range of need.

But West Midlands LAs typically identify young people as 'MLD'. The training and development work with schools challenges the MLD classification as a 'catch all' category.

5. Out of borough

Pupils with SEN, in Walsall schools, January 2016

As % of all pupils

SEN type as % of all pupils; as % of pupils with SEN

Key Stage	Number on roll	SEN support	State-ment	EHCP	Total SEN	No SEN
EYFS	8300	526	36	80	642	7658
KS1	7641	924	147	48	1119	6522
KS2	14933	2194	326	149	2669	12264
KS3	10642	1465	395	64	1924	8718
KS4	6896	811	371	23	1205	5691
KS5	3346	131	101	58	290	3056
Total	51758	6051	1376	422	7849	43909
%		11.7	2.7	0.8	15.2	84.8

Not all those on roll in Walsall schools are Walsall residents. The table above shows that there were 1,798 on roll with a statement or plan (EHCP – Education Health & Care plan), 3.5% of the total number on roll.

For out of borough, as at the end of summer term 2017, there were 220 Walsall resident pupils with statements or EHC plans (12%) going to different types of schools that are outside the borough boundary:

Mainstream schools	90
Independent special schools	51
Special (state funded) schools	57
Further Education	6
Alternative provision	4
Others (training, medical, bespoke)	12
Total	220

The current 51 placements in independent non maintained special schools cost around £2.5 million a year. The average placement cost is £45,216 a year. (The 51 represent 2.8% of all placements of Walsall children and young people with statements/plans - Birmingham's rate is 5%). (Numbers have reduced in a year with some older children transitioning to adulthood).

A sample of transport costs gives an average transport cost per pupil of £9,407 a year in addition to the placement cost.

Independent non maintained placements by type of need:

SEMH	(Social & Emotional Health)	12
ASC	(Autistic spectrum)	12
MLD	(Moderate Learning Difficulty)	6

SLD	(Severe Learning Difficulty)	6
SPLD	(Specific Learning Difficulty)	6
HI	(Hearing Impaired)	2
Other		7
Total		51

This shows an over-representation of pupils with SEMH and ASC in out of borough placements.

'SEMH' is an area for development in Walsall (and is not in the current proposals going to Cabinet), but the school expansions programme (accompanied by the special school funding review) are designed to encourage Walsall's special schools to take more complex SEN who are currently going out of borough.